



RANJIT SINGH



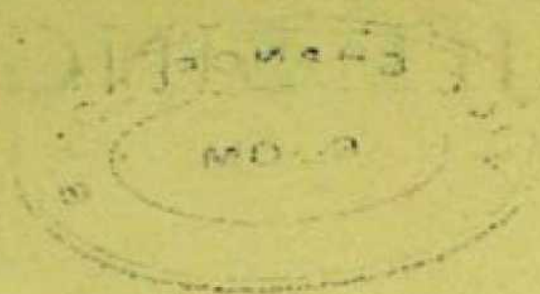
RANJIT SINGH

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To
My Teachers

PREFACE

Ranjit Singh occupies a unique place in Indian History. He found the Sikhs disunited, disorganised and pressed by the Afghans ; when he died the Punjab was clear of the Afghans, the Sikhs formed one of the most formidable military powers in India and the Sikh empire stretched from the Sutlej to the defiles of the Khyber, from the snowy deserts of Little Tibet to the confines of Sindh. Only British arms and British diplomacy stood in the way of further expansion and none appreciated the risks of an armed conflict with the East India Company more keenly than the one-eyed Lion of the Punjab. A good soldier, a great diplomat, one of the greatest of rulers, his fascinating career cannot but tempt a historical investigator to attempt a fresh review. Thanks to the monumental history of Cunningham and the valuable monograph of Lepel Griffin every schoolboy is now familiar with the deeds and exploits of Ranjit, but I felt that a re-examination of the old materials and a study of the unpublished papers in the Imperial Record Department may still throw fresh light on the subject. The results of my labours were embodied in a dissertation which earned me the Premchand Roychand Studentship and won the approbation of Sir Jadunath Sarkar, my examiner. Thus encouraged, I pursued the subject further for three years as the rules of the

studentship required and then recast the whole work in the light of Sir Jadunath's criticisms and suggestions.

The present monograph does not aspire to replace the earlier works of Cunningham, Lepel Griffin and Latif. I have scrupulously avoided, as far as practicable, all personal details about Ranjit, except in the opening chapter. Further, Chapters II and III have been written largely with a view to round my work off. It has been mainly my aim to elucidate in the light of new evidence the relations of Ranjit Singh with the Afghans on the one hand, and his Indian and British neighbours on the other. A graphic account of Ranjit's Civil Administration has also been attempted with what success it is for my readers to judge. An estimate of the Sikh military system has been given in the light of Dr. Surendranath Sen's criticism of the military system of the Marathas, but a more detailed account has not been found possible for the time being. None is more alive to the shortcomings of this work than the author. His lack of experience is responsible for the typographical errors and he feels that a more detailed map might be of greater use to the reader. These defects will be removed if the book ever passes through a second edition.

I have already acknowledged my indebtedness to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Kt., C.I.E. Dr. Surendranath Sen, M.A., Ph.D., B.Litt., Asutosh Professor of Mediaeval and Modern Indian History, Calcutta University, has kindly gone through my manuscript.

and offered me many valuable suggestions. Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri, M.A., Ph.D., and Mr. Indubhusan Banerjee, M.A., have also placed me under a heavy debt of gratitude. But for their inspiring teaching the present work would never have been attempted. Mr. Banerjee placed his valuable library unreservedly at my disposal and Dr. Raychaudhuri saved me from many of the pitfalls with which the subject abounds. Their advice and help were always generously given. My thanks are also due to Prof. S. C. Sengupta, M.A., of the Chittagong College. None of them, however, is in any way responsible for any defect in this volume.

It is my pleasant duty to record the ready assistance that I received from Mr. J. C. Chakravorti, M.A., Registrar, Calcutta University, and Mr. A. C. Ghatak, M.A., Superintendent, Calcutta University Press, and his Staff. It is entirely due to them that the book passed through the press in an incredibly short period of seven weeks. I should take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to the Keeper of Imperial Records for permitting me to go through the papers under his charge. The tedious work of preparing the Index has been kindly performed by Mr. Anadicharan Banerjee, B.A., and Mr. Sasadhar Mandal, B.A.

It is needless to refer to the feelings of a neophyte when he presents his first publication to the scholarly world. My only justification is the importance of my subject. I have worked on it honestly and unsparingly for a number of years and

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PREFACE

I hope that if this monograph fails to earn the approval of the learned historians, it will at least meet with their indulgence.

SENATE HOUSE : NARENDRA KRISHNA SINHA.
CALCUTTA.

The 31st October, 1933.

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MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

"From a portrait by Jewun Ram, a native artist of Delhi, who accompanied the Governor-General to the interview at Roopur in 1831."

RANJIT SINGH

CHAPTER I.

ENVIRONMENT AND EARLY YEARS.

Ranjit Singh was born in 1780. Guru Gobind Singh had died in 1708. The history of these intervening seventy-two years must be clearly grasped in order to understand the peculiarities of the celebrated Sikh monarch and his short-lived creation, the Sikh monarchy.

Guru Gobind Singh was the father of Sikh militarism. He found that the two most potent forces in Sikhism were the all-pervading sense of brotherhood and reverence for the Guru. He abolished the personal Guruship and declared that the Guru would henceforth be found in the Khalsa. Thus the Khalsa or the commonwealth became the most potent force in Sikh life. The policy of persecution that was being followed by the decadent Delhi monarchy did much to mould the Sikh nation. The ring dance of repression and revenge that had begun continued during the period of Banda's temporal leadership of the Sikhs (1708-1716) and even afterwards. The visibly increasing weakness of the

Delhi monarchy encouraged the Sikh warriors and they began to organise themselves into small bands. Then fell in quick succession stunning blows on the declining Mughal empire—the invasion of Nadir Shah and the invasions of Ahmad Shah. Ahmad Shah Abdali compelled the Mughal Emperors to cede to him the Punjab and Sindh. He also conquered Kashmir. Thus the Sikhs came under the sway of Ahmad Shah. But that ideal Afghan warrior ‘fitted for conquest yet incapable of Empire’ was too much taken up with Afghanistan to pursue a consistent policy of repression and consolidation. The Sikh misls or associations of warriors that had already been formed, gained an accession of strength. Ahmad Shah led repeated invasions; he could defeat the Sikhs but could not crush them. Ultimately after 1767 he left the Sikhs entirely to themselves.

It was in this manner that Sikh independence was realised and twelve misls or confederacies* were

* The Misls and their territories :—

The Bhangis—held Lahore, Amritsar; had conquered Multan but had lost it to the Afghans in 1779. A Bhangi Sardar also held Gujrat. The Bhangi possessions extended from Lahore and Amritsar northwards to the Jhelum and down the Jhelum.

The Kanheyas—The leader of this confederacy in 1793 was Sada Kour, mother-in-law of Ranjit. The Kanheya territories extended beyond Amritsar northwards to the hills.

The Sukerchukias—The misl had come to the forefront under Ranjit Singh's grandfather Charat Singh and his father Maha Singh. The home territories of this misl were adjacent to the Bhangi possessions in the Rechna Doab, Gujranwala being one of their most important places.

The Nakkais—Originally inhabited the Chunian Tahsil of Lahore; the Nakkai country lay southwest of Lahore and extended southwards.

now established which divided among themselves the greater portion of the Punjab and Sirhind.

A chaos was erected into a system that has been described as 'theocratic confederate feudalism.' But with the link of a common enemy gone, dissensions, discords and mutual plunderings began. Then came the man of destiny, Ranjit Singh, to establish a military monarchy on the ruins of feudalism. But in a study of his career we must first of all take into consideration the political environment in which he was born—'the country on the line of invasion, the field of strife and of anarchy—the people, a race nurtured in storm, possessed of the hardihood necessary to such condition but having also many of the vices of a people knowing only two grades, the tyrannised and the tyrant.'*

The Fyzulapurias—The great leader Kapur Singh established his power in Jalandhar. Their possessions included Jalandhar, Nurpur, Bahrampur, Bharatgarh and Patti.

The Ahluwalias—This confederacy had its headquarters in Kapurthala. This was the greatest confederacy of the Bist Jalandhar.

The Dallochwalas—This confederacy was founded in the extreme southwest of Jalandhar, near the junction of the Beas and the Sutlej.

The Ramgarhias—Their possessions lay mostly in the Dasuya Tahsil of the Hosiarpur District and in the extreme north of Jalandhar.

The Nishanwalas—Their chief town was Ambala.

The Karora Singhia—Their headquarters was at Chiloundhi, 20 miles from Karnal. Their possessions extended to the banks of the Sutlej and the Jalandhar Doab.

The Sahids and Nihangs—were in the Cis-Sutlej region.

The Phulkias—also a Cis-Sutlej misl—Patiala, Nabha, and Jhind being very important Cis-Sutlej states.

Many of the Trans-Sutlej misls had some share of the Cis-Sutlej territory under the hills from Ferozpur to Karnal and the Phulkias had their possessions between Sirhind and Delhi.

* Calcutta Review, 1844, Article V.

Early Years.

Ranjit Singh was born on the 2nd November, 1780. He was the son of Maha Singh, the leader of the Sukerchukia misl by his wife of the Jhind family. In 1785, he was betrothed and later married to Mehtab Kour, daughter of Sada Kour and Gurbaksh Singh, son of Jai Singh, the head of the Kanheya misl. Maha Singh died in 1792 and the guardian of Ranjit was now his mother. Dewan Lakhpat Rai helped her to manage the affairs of the misl and Sada Kour, Ranjit's mother-in-law, had a great influence on the conduct of affairs, especially as the dangers that surrounded the young chief were too many. In 1793, on the death of Jai Singh she got the direction of the affairs of the Kanheya misl, her husband having predeceased his father.

Under the guardianship of his mother, mother-in-law and Lakhpat Rai he grew up illiterate. In those days very few of the nobility cared for literacy. Reading and writing were not regarded as fit occupations for warriors. His illiteracy was not therefore likely to be the result of any settled plan on the part of his guardians. His early years were spent in dissipation and indulgence. Whether this was done on set purpose, as some European writers assert, or whether this was due to the very lax morality of the times, cannot be ascertained with certainty. During his minority Ranjit was married a second time to Raj Kour, a Nakkai princess.

In his seventeenth year, Ranjit is said to have asserted himself. ' Having come to years of discretion, he aspired to exercise the functions of government in his own person and meeting with some resistance and anxious to remove every obstacle that impeded the gratification of his ambition, it is reported that the means which he employed to do so involved the commission of some mysterious transactions, which if founded on truth, would deeply implicate the humanity of the Raja...He despatched the Dewan on some business of secrecy towards Kutas and Rotas where he was slain by the Zamindars and the Maharaja's mother also fell an untimely victim of his cruelty.* Captain Murray asserts that he dismissed the Dewan and caused the mother to be assassinated.† On this topic the Umdat-ut-Tawarikh and the Zafarnama do not throw any light. Most of the European travellers, however, mention the story. Major Carmichael Smyth gives only secret history. In other words, he records the scandals from hearsay. According to him the paramour of Ranjit's mother Mai Malwain was Laik Misser. Ranjit put his mother to death with his own hands. According to Prinsep, she was imprisoned through the instrumentality of Dul Singh. Carmichael Smyth even says in his notes that he saw pictures representing Ranjit Singh putting his own mother to death with his own hands, being sold

* Imperial Records—Miscellaneous, No. 128 (Foreign).

† Prinsep—Origin of the Sikh Power, p. 49, footnote.

in the open bazar. Kooshwuqt Raee is silent about the fate of Ranjit Singh's mother but admits that the Dewan was done away with.*

But we should note that the story rests on hearsay. The mysteries of the Zenana cannot normally be unravelled in the East and it is not likely that authentic records in this connection, will ever be obtained. But it must be argued in favour of Ranjit Singh that throughout his life, he never committed an unnecessarily cruel act and he was not certainly a barbarous man. 'He has never wantonly imbrued his hands in blood,' says Hugel. Burnes describes him as a despot without cruelty. Some of the Western authors have therefore tried to explain the allegation by saying that he wreaked the vengeance of a wronged son on his dissolute mother and her paramour. These conclusions, however, are not warranted by the recorded evidence in our possession. Scandals and rumours must not be confounded with facts in history. It can surely be said that the allegation is not consistent with the general character of the chieftain. We should give him 'the benefit of the common law that innocence must be assumed until guilt is proved.'

The early life and surroundings of Ranjit Singh explain much. The plastic mind of the young boy was moulded by men and women from whom he had no lofty ideas to imbibe. He was brought up more

* *Ibid*, Notes, p. 220. Kooshwuqt Raee is frequently referred to in his notes by Prinsep.

or less as a spoilt child. The early life of Ranjit Singh is a striking contrast to that of Sivaji who grew to manhood forsaken by his father under the fostering care of the able and honest Dadaji Konddev and his deeply religious, almost ascetic mother, Jija Bai.

CHAPTER II.

ABSORPTION OF THE TRANS-SUTLEJ MISLS.

The rise of Ranjit Singh is a unique phenomenon in history. His father left him at the head of a small confederacy, only one among twelve, with a small territory and a small body of Sikh cavalry very little superior to that of the neighbouring chieftains. There were at that time several chiefs superior to the young Sukerchukia chieftain in strength and celebrity—Golab Singh Bhangi, Jodh Singh Ramgarhia, Bhag Singh Ahluwalia, Sahib Singh Gujrathia, Tara Singh Gheba of the Dallehwala Confederacy, Bhagail Singh Karorasinghia, and Budh Singh Fyzullapuria.* Besides the twelve misls there were many states in the hills such as Katoch, Bhimbur, Rajori, Punch, Jammu. Some of these were large and some small, some of these were Muhammadan and others Hindu. The fanatical Muhammadan chieftains on the right and left banks of the Indus were also practically independent and likely to tax sorely the energies of any would-be conqueror. In the east was the British Government, 'fresh risen to its majesty of power' not likely to allow any state to be dangerously powerful. On the west was Afghanistan under the Duranis.

* Wade—On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces—Foreign Dept., Miscellaneous, 1824.

The Durani empire extended from Herat in the west to Kashmir* in the east, from northern Balkh to Southern Shikarpur.† It boasted of a proud record of past victories over the Indians and though ruled by weak monarchs was peopled by the most martial and manly races that ever formed the backbone of any state. Such was the political condition of the Punjab when Ranjit Singh began his career. In this chapter we will deal with his record of 'petty warfare, systematic aggression and almost constant success'‡ resulting in the absorption of the Trans-Sutlej misls.

The first step in the rise of Ranjit Singh was marked by Shah Zeman's grant of Lahore. Shah Zeman, the Afghan ruler, a grandson of Ahmad Shah, was ambitious to play the part of a great Indian conqueror. With the example of the great warrior Ahmad Shah's failure, he ought to have paused before nursing such an ambition. In his two early invasions in 1793 and 1795 he had not advanced beyond Hasan Abdal. His third invasion and the

* Kashmir was conquered by Ahmad Shah's general Abdullah Khan (A. H. 1167). A local rebellion led to its reconquest by the Abdali Deputy Nooruddin with the help of the Jammu Raja (Siyar IV. pp. 4 and 5). Timur Shah, son of Ahmad Shah, appointed as his governor there Haji Karim Dad. The administration of this Abdali governor as also that of his son was notorious for wanton cruelty and insatiable avarice. Under the Abdalis, small independent kingships survived in the Jammu hills and in the surrounding regions. As the approach to this remote province from Kabul led through hostile independent territories, the governors were practically independent.

† Kaye—History of the War in Afghanistan, Vol. I, p. 11.

‡ Osborne—Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh, Introduction, p. xxxvi.

first that was a serious attempt is dated 1796-97. This time he occupied Lahore on the 3rd January, 1797.* In his fourth invasion in 1798, he also occupied Lahore. He planned an invasion of India for the fifth time but could not carry it out. On each occasion the exposed condition of other parts of his dominions necessitated an abrupt return. In 1796, many Indian chiefs opened communications with him—the Rohillas, the Wazir of Oudh and even Tipu Sultan of Mysore. Shah Zeman wrote to Tipu, 'We shall soon march with our conquering army to wage war with the infidels and polytheists and free those regions from the contamination of those shameless tribes.'† But nothing came out of this grand project. His own power in Afghanistan rested on too shaky a foundation to enable him to play the part of an Indian conqueror. The Ahmad-Shahi tradition proved his undoing. Had he given his undivided attention to Afghanistan, he might have consolidated his sway there. As it was, his attempt to conquer the Punjab cost him his throne.

But in Ranjit Singh's career the invasions of Shah Zeman exerted a decisive influence. The Sikhs did not openly challenge Shah Zeman, though they might have worsted some Afghan detachments left behind by him, *e.g.*, the troops under Ahmad Khan Shahnchi. Ranjit was one of these chieftains who took to flight on the first approach of Shah Zeman. Kanheyalal mentions Ranjit's taking

* Elphinstone—Account of the Kingdom of Kabul, Vol. II, p. 315.

† The Asiatic Annual Register, 1799, No. 28.

shelter in Gujranwala. But in 1798, he took advantage of the confusion caused by the Afghan invasion to conquer some towns and villages and levy tributes from others. Though Ranjit Singh withdrew on the approach of Zeman Shah, he is later said to have done homage to the king. About the end of 1798, the Shah had to retreat to Afghanistan to meet a Persian army. On his way back his guns were lost in the Hydaspes by a sudden rising of the river. 'But they were afterwards dug out and restored by Ranjit Singh and Saheb Singh.'* Eight out of twelve guns were raised and restored. In return for this service the ambitious Sukerchukia chieftain got a royal investiture of Lahore, the capital of the Punjab.

According to Kanhey Lal, Shah Zeman appointed Ranjit Singh as the Governor of Lahore in anticipation of the service to be performed. When the guns reached him the Shah was overjoyed and sent presents to Ranjit Singh.†

But according to Tarikh-i-Sultani, Zeman Shah was unable to check the growing Sikh power. He feared that after his departure from the Punjab Sikh depredations would increase. He therefore wanted to appoint one of the Sikhs as his Governor in Lahore as a way out of the difficulty. So he appointed Ranjit Singh in A.D. 1797.‡

* Elphinstone—Account of the Kingdom of Kabul, Vol. II, p. 317.

† A notice of the Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh by Kanhey Lal, Vol. XVI, Indian Antiquary, Trans. E. Rehatask.

‡ Ibid, Reference from the Tarikh-i-Sultani, footnote.—Editor.

But a grant of the Governorship of Lahore in 1797 does not seem probable. His fourth invasion occurred in 1798 and we can easily infer from the subsequent events that he had not in 1797, at the time of quitting Lahore, left Ranjit Singh in charge of it. The grant must therefore have been made in course of the fourth invasion. But speaking broadly the view of the *Tarikh-i-Sultani* might contain an element of truth. It was Afghan statesmanship that was responsible for the grant. We know that during the later part of his stay in India Ahmad Shah had tried a policy of conciliation. He had recognised Amar Singh of Patiala as an almost independent ruler. He had attempted to secure the co-operation of the Rajput chiefs of the Jalandhar Doab and he had confirmed Lehna Singh Bhangi in his possessions in the neighbourhood of Lahore. The same motive might have induced Shah Zeman. What Ala Singh and Amar Singh of Patiala were to Ahmad Shah, Ranjit Singh would be to Zeman Shah. That might have been partly the view of the Afghan invader in 1798-99.

The grant of the governorship was therefore made partly with a view to quicken the energy of Ranjit Singh in the task of recovering the lost guns (or as a recompense for the trouble he had already taken) as also to ensure the support of a rising Sikh chieftain for the future. Little did Shah Zeman imagine that this grant would be the beginning of an astonishingly successful military career, and this petty Sukerchukia chieftain would wrest from the

Afghans the best portion of the heritage of Ahmad Shah.

The first important achievement of Ranjit Singh was the occupation of Lahore, held by the Bhangis. In this he was assisted by Sada Kour, his mother-in-law. The rulers, Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh, were oppressive and tyrannical. Mian Badruddin, a choudhuri of Lahore, quarrelled with the Chhatris of the town and was imprisoned by Chet Singh. A deputation to Chet Singh to obtain Badruddin's release failed. Some of the prominent citizens of Lahore belonging to Badruddin's party then sent an invitation to Ranjit Singh to come and occupy the city. Chet Singh's manager was won over and opened one of the gates of Lahore to Ranjit Singh. The Muhammadans of Lahore had also been partly won over through Quazi Abdur Rahaman. The Capital of the Punjab thus came into the possession of Ranjit. The triple ownership of Lahore, combined with the oppressive nature of the rule facilitated Ranjit's conquest by diplomacy and ruse. Of the three chiefs Chet Singh alone had seriously attempted resistance. (Samvat 1856, A.D. 1799.)

A grand alliance of the Sikh chieftains with a view to curb Ranjit Singh was the immediate result of the success of the young Sukerchukia leader. Sahib Singh of Gujrat, a son of Gujar Singh, at one time one of the conjoint rulers of Lahore, Gulab Singh of the Bhangi confederacy, Nizamuddin of Kasur and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia collected an army on the eastern side of Lahore, at a village called

Bhasin (Gulab Singh being the Mazdar or root). Gulab Singh died owing to excessive indulgence in liquor. Ranjit was very hard pressed for want of money. The confederate chiefs, however, dispersed after two months without doing anything. Their mutual jealousies and the fear in which they stood of Ranjit's preparations might have brought about this dissolution of the confederacy. Thus Ranjit got rid of the great danger. After this the Sikh chieftains never had a chance of overcoming him and they were also never united.

Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat continued to give trouble in 1800 as well as in 1801. In the latter year the Bhangi misaldar made a show of submission. Ranjit Singh wanted to take possession of Akalgarh not very distant from Ramnagar, belonging to Dal Singh, once a lieutenant of Maha Singh, Ranjit's father. Dal Singh was suspected of intriguing with Sahib Singh of Gujrat. The person of Dal Singh was seized by stratagem. He was imprisoned in Lahore and Ranjit marched to Akalgarh; but the wife of the imprisoned Dal Singh successfully resisted. Jodh Singh of Wazirabad wanted to take up the cause of Dal Singh and sent for Sahib Singh of Gujrat to come and help him. Ranjit marched against them; Sada Kour and Sodhi Keshra Singh, however, acted as peacemakers and a compromise was effected. Ranjit Singh's conciliatory attitude was most probably due to the fact that at this stage he was not able to carry on successful siege operations although he was able to plunder the open

country. Dal Singh was released but died soon after. Ranjit went to Akalgarh and appropriated everything belonging to Dal Singh, leaving to his widow two villages only for subsistence. He then made an outpost in the acquired territory. In course of these operations Sahib Singh Bhangi had submitted after a severe fight. The most important event of the year was an exchange of turbans with Sardar Fateh Singh, the head of the Ahluwalia misl. This friendship stood Ranjit in good stead during the early years of struggle for ascendancy. Sada Kour and Fateh Singh were his two great helpers. Fateh Singh had resources, abilities, a very considerable following but no personal ambition and initiative like Ranjit. Sada Kour's diplomatic abilities, her wise guidance, were Ranjit's great assets.

Ranjit's next important Trans-Sutlej conquest was the great Bhangi stronghold, Amritsar. Mai Sukhan, the widow of Gulab Singh Bhangi had a firm hold over the city. Gurdit Singh, her son, was a minor. Santokh Singh was her general manager. But he was not on good terms with Shaikh Kamaluddin, in charge of the Deohree of the fort. Rhur Mal, a big banker of Amritsar, removed his belongings to the Kanheya fort in Amritsar when asked for nazaranah by Mai Sukhan. Shaikh Kamaluddin negotiated with Ranjit who called Rhur Mal to Lahore and marched to Amritsar. Mai Sukhan's resistance under these circumstances could not but be feeble. She submitted.* Ranjit Singh gave her a

*Umdat-ut-Tawarikh. Part II, pp. 56, 57.

small jagir and occupied the fort. He derived a good deal of assistance from his mother-in-law Sada Kour and his friend Fateh Singh.

In 1807, in course of the second Cis-Sutlej expedition while the Sikh army was besieging Naraingarh, Tara Singh Gheba of the Dallehwala confederacy died. He was accompanying Ranjit. The possessions of Tara Singh were secured in the teeth of the opposition of his widow. In the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* we read that Mohkam Chand who had taken service under Ranjit Singh was granted the fort of Rahon (the territory of Tara Singh Gheba). Thus the Dallehwala misl made its exit from history.*

In 1809-10 after his capture of Kangra and the subsequent hill operations, Ranjit took Haryana and the surrounding towns in the Jalandhar Doab from the widow of Bhagail Singh Karora Singhia. The person of Bhoop Singh Fyzulapuria was seized and Mohkam Chand conquered his possessions. Jodh Singh of Wazirabad died and his son made a heavy money payment and thus postponed the confiscation of his estates. These were, however, taken during the next year. Sahib Singh of Gujrat, the Bhangi misaldar, the arch intriguer, was dispossessed of his territories. Gujrat, Jalalpur, Islamgarh and other forts in the possession of Sahib Singh and his son Gulab Singh were taken.

* Wade says that Tara Singh died in course of the first Cis-Sutlej expedition. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 67.

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In 1811 the territory of the Nakkais was conquered by Mohkam Chand. After annexation it was given to Kharak Singh, the heir-apparent. Kahan Singh of the Nakkai misl was given a jagir. The possession of Budh Singh Fyzulapuria in the Jalandhar Doab were occupied by Dewan Mohkam Chand. His troops, holding Patti, near Tarn Tarn resisted for some time. They were, however, worsted. This year also Fakir Imamuddin was sent with Ram Singh to capture the fort of Hajipur and other places occupied by Nadhan Singh, a son of the deceased Kanheya chief Jai Singh and the uncle of Ranjit's wife, Mehtab Kour. A jagir was, however, given to the family.

So long as Jodh Singh Ramgarhia was alive, he aided Ranjit loyally in many of his campaigns. A famous story is associated with the name of Jodh Singh. When Ranjit ordered some presents to be given to the old Ramgarhia chief, the latter begged to be excused from the honour and added that in those times a man was fortunate if allowed to retain his own turban on his head, thus hinting openly at the aggressiveness of the Sikh ruler. During the lifetime of Jodh Singh Ranjit remained quiet. But on the death of the latter towards the close of 1816, his territory was taken from his cousins. Thus the Ramgarhia misl made its exit.

In 1820-21 Sada Kour's possessions were annexed and she was imprisoned. Thus ended the history of the Kanheya misl. She had brought up two of the sons of Ranjit Singh, Sher Singh and

Tara Singh, said to have been born to Mehtab Kour, her daughter. Her son-in-law now required of her that, as they had grown up, she must make provision for them out of her own estates. Ranjit applied force, and asked her to assign half of her own estates to her grandsons. Sada Kour refused and threatened to put herself under British protection. She was put under restraint and compelled to execute a deed in favour of her grandsons. All her possessions except Wadni and other Cis-Sutlej territories were annexed and she was kept a close prisoner until the day of her death.*

Amarnath's version of the events leading to Sada Kour's incarceration is different. Sada Kour, says he, had enmity in her mind and used to write letters to many persons preaching hatred against Ranjit. Gami Khan Khansama and Kumar Sher Singh informed Ranjit Singh that Sada Kour was ready to disobey him and that they were of opinion that there was every possibility of her crossing the Sutlej and also of raising people up in arms against him.†

A comparison of the two versions of the events leading to Sada Kour's incarceration leads us to conclude that both these views contain an element of truth. Sada Kour and her son-in-law were masterful personalities and it was very unlikely that they would pull on well with each other. Ranjit's

* Murray, pp. 127-28; Latif, pp. 423-24.

† Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, A.D. 1821.

policy was one of absorption of all the Sikh confederacies. No tie of kinship, no sentiment of gratitude was strong enough to stand in his way. Sada Kour who was one of the architects of Ranjit's fortunes, was always conscious of the debt of gratitude which he owed to her. Her influence combined with her intriguing disposition, was a menace to the stability of Ranjit Singh's new kingdom. Her restlessness, her high tone amounting almost to defiance, born of her disappointment to play the role of a Kingmaker was likely to encourage other Sardars to defy the new lord of Lahore and Amritsar. Abstract morality does not find any place in politics which has a peculiar code of its own and judged by political standards of morality Ranjit Singh cannot be greatly blamed for his dealings with Sada Kour though of course there is no reason why she should not have been spared any unnecessary harshness. Murray comments in this connection 'howsoever humanity may plead in her behalf one does not see how she could well be treated otherwise being what she is, and has been.' *

This is the story of the gradual absorption of the Trans-Sutlej misls.† The Ahluwalia misl retained its territories intact and an exception was made in its case as Fateh Singh Ahluwalia was considered a safe friend.* His relations with Ranjit Singh were

* Origin of the Sikh Power, p. 135.

† This chapter is based on the accounts of Amarnath, Sohanlal, Murray and Wade though frequent references have not been made in the footnotes. •

peculiar. In youth there was a position of complete equality between the two. In 1802 there was a romantic exchange of turbans and the formal establishment of friendship. At that time the possessions of Fateh Singh were equal to if not greater in extent than those of Ranjit Singh. They together entered into a 'Treaty of Friendship and Amity' with the East India Company. From this complete equality he sank into the position of a subordinate assistant and instrument of Ranjit Singh's aggrandisement. As the Maharaja's power increased the territory of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia was also very considerably extended by him. But even at this stage the show of equality was kept up. As Metcalfe wrote, one of the ministers of Fateh Singh was employed in common with the ministers of Ranjit Singh in 1809.*

But we find that he gradually sank into a subordinate chief though without any formal acknowledgment of subjection. But in 1826, all at once, he crossed the Sutlej and threw himself on the protection of the English. He was certainly apprehensive of the designs of Ranjit Singh but the immediate reasons of this hasty decision are unknown. The English could not, true to the terms of their treaty with Ranjit, concern themselves with the territory on the other side of the Sutlej. Ranjit offered fair and equitable terms and an amicable adjustment was arrived at. Fateh Singh was brought back with

* Political Proceedings, 17th February, 1826, No. 35.

honour. He said that his evil counsellors had led him astray. Ranjit Singh pacified him and gave him a sword. On Fateh Singh's death in 1836, Ranjit Singh, however, demanded a nazaranah from his son.*

Ranjit's successful absorption of the Trans-Sutlej misls was largely due to his ability to take advantage of the differences and discords of the princes and princelings of the Punjab. The Sikh chiefs were too divided among themselves to unite effectually against him. Ties of blood and friendship he held in little esteem. The big Sardars were one after another deprived of most of their possessions. Those who resisted were imprisoned and most of their property was confiscated.

Forster had remarked sometime before the rise of Ranjit Singh: 'We may see some ambitious chief led on by his genius and success and absorbing the power of his associates, display from the ruins of their commonwealth the standard of monarchy.' He proved to be a true prophet. The rise of Ranjit Singh though apparently sudden and unforeseen was really gradual and inevitable. As the brilliant traveller observes, 'The pages of history are filled with like effects springing from the like causes.'

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, III, p. 342.

CHAPTER III.

CONQUEST OF THE PUNJAB HILLS AND THE MUHAMMADAN STATES OF THE PUNJAB AND THE ADJOINING REGIONS.

The petty states of the Alpine Punjab may be classified into three groups. The first consisted of the rich valley of Kashmir and all the small states between the Indus and the Jhelum thus comprising the western division of the Alpine Punjab. The second included Jammu and the other petty states between the Jhelum and the Ravi. The third comprised Jalandhar and the various small states between the Ravi and the Sutlej. The second may be called the central or Jammu division and the third may be named as the eastern or Jalandhar division. In the first group Kashmir, Torbela, Darband, etc., were mostly peopled by Muhammadans. In the second group Jammu to the east of the Chenab was predominantly Hindu. Poonch on the Poonch, Rajori on Tohi river, Bhimbur at the foot of the hills, Kishtwar on the upper Chenab and some other states were predominantly Muhammadan and Jasrota, Basoli and others were Hindu.* In the eastern division all the twelve states including Kangra or Katoch, Chamba, Nurpur, etc., were peopled by the Rajputs.*

* Hill States of the Punjab—Cunningham.

Besides these hill states and the confederacies mentioned in the preceding chapter, Ranjit also conquered all the other states, independent or semi-independent, situated within the fork of the Punjab between the Sutlej and the Indus including Multan. His conquests even extended to the other side of the Indus, and came to include Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan, held by the semi-independent Baluchi and Afghan Governors of Kabul.

In 1800, Ranjit is said to have gone to Jammu, whose ruler presented a nazaranah. In course of this expedition the Lahore ruler also conquered Mirwal, fixed a nazaranah of 8,000 rupees on Narwal, went to Sialkot, reduced it and also took possession of Dilwargarh.

In 1801 Nizamuddin of Kasur was chastised. He possessed considerable power. Kasur was a Pathan colony of some importance and was the mythological rival of Lahore. Its chief was a source of much trouble for he had joined the coalition against Ranjit Singh, which had threatened his power after the conquest of Lahore. Nizamuddin also tried to create trouble in conjunction with Sahib Singh Gujrathia in 1801. Fateh Singh Kalianwala was sent against him. Nizamuddin submitted. He sent his brother Kutbuddin to pay his respects to the Lahore court. In the same year, after his conquest of Akalgarh, Ranjit went to the hills. Sansar Chand, Chief of Katoch, came to the rescue of the hill rajas. But Ranjit's approach scared his

people away. Ranjit defeated the Chief of Nurpur and fixed a nazaranah.

In 1802 Ranjit conquered Chiniot or Chandiot. Jassa Singh, son of Karm Singh, resisted for two months and then negotiated peace through Fateh Singh Kalianwala and Chiniot was captured. Several Sikh chieftains made a common cause to march against Kasur. They informed Ranjit Singh who hastened to join them and the march to Kasur was finally decided upon. Nizamuddin's practice of robbery in the outskirts of Lahore made Ranjit come to a quick decision. Nizamuddin retired within the fort. He tried to make friends with Nahanga Singh, one of the confederate chiefs, and succeeded in bringing some gunpowder inside the fort through him. The fort was, however, taken and the city plundered. It was restored to its chief for a heavy nazaranah.

This year the Maharaja also invaded Multan. Some regions were conquered on the way. Muzaffar Khan gave presents. Kanhey Lal states that Ranjit captured the whole city and plundered it and the Nawab then sued for peace. We do not find this statement corroborated by others, nor does the story seem to be very probable. Ranjit Singh had before gone to Jalandhar and occupied Phagwara and other villages belonging to the local zeminders. He invested Hosiarpur and also went to Kasba Bijwara which belonged to Sansar Chand of Katoch who resisted but at last fled.

Taking advantage of the dissensions in Kabul, the governors of the distant Indian possessions of

Kabul practically drifted away from the Kabul monarchy. Ranjit Singh also felt his way in Jhang, Sahiwal and other Kabul territories, all peopled in the main by the Muhammadans. Ahmad Khan of Jhang, after a stiff resistance, consented to pay an annual nazaranah (1803). According to Wade advance was made as far as Rawalpindee in the north-west. 'The bars of Karlan and Kathia between the Ravi and the Chenab, the bar of Sahiwal between the Chenab and the Jhelam were made tributary.....levied the usual contribution on Ahmadabad and Khusab.'*

In 1805, Ranjit marched upon Jhang and its chief out of fear promised to double the annual nazaranah. Ranjit also advanced on Multan and the Nawab then bought off the invader. The Durani governors in the Muhammadan districts to the west of the Punjab submitted to the Maharaja as his star was in the ascendant. After his first Cis-Sutlej expedition Ranjit went on a pilgrimage to Sri Juala Jiu in the hills. Fateh Chand, brother of Sansar Chand, presented a nazaranah and asked for help against the Raja of the Gurkhas. Amar Singh's emissaries are also said to have met the Maharaja.†

Ranjit declined to be won over by Amar Singh and the withdrawal of the Gurkha commander quieted the alarm of the Rajput chief and he did not enter into a costly alliance with Ranjit Singh.

* Wade—On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces.

† Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, A.D. 1807.

The year 1807 saw Ranjit Singh's conquest of Kasur. He collected a big army and surrounded Kasur. Nizamuddin's successor, Kutubuddin, fought for a few days and then surrendered. He was given a small territory south of the Sutlej. Ranjit also went to Multan. He took the town but could not take the fort. After a fruitless siege lasting a month, the Nawab paid 50,000 rupees. In course of the journey, communications are said to have been opened with the chief of Bahawalpur.

About this time Ranjit also succeeded in taking Pathankot. He went to Jasrota, fixed a tribute of 8,000 rupees per annum on the Raja of Basoli and a similar amount on the Raja of Chamba. Ranjit next conquered various places in the upper Punjab, the most notable of them being Sialkot. He went with Sardar Fateh Singh and surrounded the fort. He sent word to Jiwan Singh of Sialkot to surrender the fort and to take two or three villages for maintenance. Jiwan Singh refused and a bloody battle ensued. Two or three forts in the outskirts were taken. Guns were placed on the high walls of these forts and Sialkot was captured. Jiwan Singh submitted and was given a jagir. Kharak Singh was also sent with an army against Shaikhupura. The post was conquered by stratagem.

After his check in the east, marked by the treaty of Amritsar (1809), Ranjit turned his attention to Kangra. But this account of the taking of Kangra must be prefaced by a description of the advance of the Gurkha power. The 'Bāra'

(Twelve) and the 'Athāra' (eighteen) 'Thakurias,' *i.e.*, the twelve and the eighteen lordships, that comprised the total number of Cis-Sutlej hill states had fallen into the hands of the Gurkhas.* When the Nepalis had thus established themselves in the Cis-Sutlej mountain territories they crossed the river and laid siege to Kangra, a possession of Sansar Chand of Katoch. Sansar Chand invited Ranjit Singh to help him against Amar Singh Thappa, who according to Amarnath with fifty thousand troops and two guns had invested the fort of Kangra. The number of Gurkha troops has most probably been considerably exaggerated by the author. Very hard pressed by Amar Singh, Sansar Chand promised to hand over the fort of Kangra, if Ranjit would come to his help. Ranjit Singh asked Sansar Chand to let his army occupy the fort, but Sansar Chand liked to postpone it till the final defeat of the Gurkhas. Ranjit disbelieved him and imprisoned his son Anroodh Chand who was in attendance. Sansar Chand was thus obliged to hand over the fort of which Pahar Singh Mann was appointed. 'Thanadar.'† Amar Singh's own position became untenable. He took fright, came to an understanding with Ranjit Singh, paid one lakh of rupees to him, crossed the river and retired.‡ Kooshwuqt Raee's narration of incidents is, how-

* Protected Sikh and Hill States, 1824.—T. Fortescue, Civil Commissioner.

† Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Part II, pp. 86-87.

• ‡ Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, A.D. 809.

ever, somewhat different. According to him, 'after the engagement with Ranjit Singh, Sansar Chand entered into an engagement with Amar Singh, promising to surrender the fort to him and thus obtaining leave to bring away his family, threw into the place his brother with four months' supplies. He thus hoped to keep it against both claimants. Ranjit Singh seized Anroodh Chand, obtained from Sansar Chand an order to be received into the palace, bribed Amar Singh in order to secure access to the gate, when no opposition was offered to his entrance.'* In course of his hill operations Ranjit imposed a tribute with military service upon the Rajas of the mountainous principalities of Haripur, Nurpur, Bheda and Basoli.

In 1810, after the break-up of a conference with Shah Shuja at Khoosab, Ranjit Singh with great rapidity annexed Sahiwal, made Ooch tributary, exacted ten thousand rupees from the Fakirs there and then appeared before Multan and demanded it in the name of the Shah. The fortress was besieged as Muzaffar Zung refused to give it up. But Ranjit could make no impression inspite of the fact that he had brought down the great Bhangi gun to batter down the walls. After this Ranjit consented to retire on receipt of 80,000 rupees.† According to another version a lakh of rupees was promised and Ranjit took the brother-

* Prinsep—Origin of the Sikh Power, p. 223.

† On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces.

in-law of the Nawab as a hostage. After his return from Multan, Ranjit Singh was engaged in consolidating his hold on the hill regions. Bhimbur and Rajori were very difficult to conquer, difficult even for the genius of Mokham Chand. The Jammu chief and Sultan Khan of Bhimbur submitted and presented 40,000 rupees each as nazaranah.*

In 1812, after his marriage, Kharak Singh, the heir-apparent was sent against Bhimbur and Rajori. The Bhimbur chief was in open rebellion. He had murdered Ismail Khan who had got half of his territory, according to a previous arrangement of Ranjit Singh. Kharak Singh's agent was defeated. Mohkam Chand had to hurry to the scene to bring the situation under control. He imprisoned the Bhimbur chief Sultan Khan by a stratagem. Both Bhimbur and Rajori were occupied and apparently submitted.† Ranjit's hold over Bhimbur and Rajori was calculated to give some advantage in case of an expedition to Kashmir.

The year 1814, is marked by Ranjit's unsuccessful attempt to conquer Kashmir. Mohkam Chand could not take the command of this expedition, as he was seriously ill and deprived of his experience and generalship, the Maharaja fared very badly. The difficulties and dangers predicted by him could not be surmounted without his

* Zafarnama, 1810.

† Prinsep, pp. 91-92; 109. Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, II, p. 127.



skill and knowledge. In pursuance of the advice of the treacherous Raja Agar Khan of Rajori, the army was arranged in two divisions. Ranjit Singh himself at the head of the main army was to march through the Punch route and a detachment under Ramdyal, a grandson of Mohkam Chand, Dal Singh and Namdar Khan Thakkar marched to Hirpur and Shapeyan from Baramgola. Ramdyal's detachment secured the pass, occupied Hirpur but failed in its attack on Shapeyan. The Afghans opposed and a battle followed. Rains fell. The Sikh guns could not be fired. A battle of swords followed. Jiwan Mal Munshi, an ideal daredevil khalsa Ghorcharah and Fateh Singh Chachi were the most prominent of the sardars who were killed. Ramdyal retreated and eagerly awaited reinforcements. The main army under Ranjit Singh himself reached Punch, only to find itself exposed to the elements. He reached Toshu Maidan and further advance was opposed by the Afghan army under the Kashmir Governor Muhammad Azim Khan. From here the Maharaja sent Ram Singh, Devidas and Kutbuddin with as many soldiers as he could spare to the aid of Ramdyal. The two main armies began to fight. Ruhulla Khan of Punch with the army of the Nazim of Kashmir occupied the summit of the mountains and began to fire guns. Gurbaksh Singh Dhari and Desha Singh Man were killed and Mit Singh was fatally wounded. The retreat of the Sikh main army was precipitous and was attended with very considerable loss. The detach-

ment under Ramdyal was surrounded but was let off, it was said out of respect for Mohkam Chand, the commandant's grandfather for whom Azim Khan professed friendship. Amarnath says, however, that Dewan Ramdyal killed 2,000 Afghans and forced the army to retreat. Azim Khan took fright, told Ramdyal about his friendship for Mohkam Chand and sent some presents for the Lahore Durbar as also a written document admitting the supremacy of the Lahore Durbar. Ramdyal thereupon retired. It is not probable that Ramdyal actually won any great victory. It is also almost a certainty that Azim Khan was not the man to let a Sikh army slip from his grasp, merely out of respect (which, from the nature of the circumstances could not be very deep) for the grandfather of the commandant. Therefore the most likely interpretation is that Ramdyal was too strongly entrenched to be defeated or dislodged without great difficulty and a very considerable sacrifice. Ramdyal too felt very insecure because of the retreat of the main army. Therefore both parties were eager to come to terms and there were talks of Azim Khan's friendship for Mohkam Chand.* This Kashmir expedition brought Ranjit Singh only 'a costly parchment.' The snow and the cold of Kashmir and the refractory nature of the hill chiefs between Kashmir and the Punjab

* This account of the Kashmir expedition is based on Sohanlal and Amarnath.

plains largely brought about the failure of this expedition.

The Maharaja's military expeditions in 1815 and 1816 were not of much importance. Multan and the Trans-Sutlej territories of Bahawalpur were ravaged and contributions were levied from them. Bhimbur, Rajori and other hill states that had taken advantage of the Kashmir debacle to rise in rebellion were once again subdued and the chiefs about the Pir Panjal range were brought under control prior to a renewed attack on Kashmir. The Raja of Nurpur sought safety by flight into British territories.

The year 1817 was spent in preparing a large expedition to Multan. Kharak Singh was the nominal commander but the real commander was Dewan Chand a *novus homo*. Ranjit's orders to the leaders of the Multan expedition were 'give the Vakils a frank reply that it is the intention of Ranjit Singh to occupy Multan and so, in future, they should not talk about the giving of nazaranah.' Subsequently Ranjit was informed by the leaders of the expedition that the Vakils of Multan came and made an agreement by which Shujabad and Khangarh were to be spared to the Nawab as maintenance and the forts of Multan and Muzaffargarh should come into the possession of Ranjit Singh. But shortly after this Mir Dewan Chand sent information that some of the Afghans spoke harshly to the Nawab and rebuked him for the terms offered, whereupon the Nawab went back upon his words

and refused to surrender.* Muzaffargarh and Khangarh were stormed and taken and the city of Multan itself was occupied by the Sikhs. The citadel, however, held out for some time. Even when the walls were battered, the Nawab refused terms. One day, however, Sadhu Singh Akali suddenly attacked the Afghans while they were unprepared and overcame them. The rest of the Sikh army supported him and the citadel was carried. Muzaffar Khan and five of his sons fell fighting bravely. Zulfikar Khan, the second son was wounded and taken prisoner. But Sarafraz Khan, the eldest son, unworthy of the lion's brood, was taken captive while hiding. The youngest son of the Nawab was also taken captive. The troops made a great loot but on their return to Lahore, they were forced to disgorge their plunders by Ranjit, just as Nadir Shah had done with the troops at Attock.† Five lakhs worth of plunder was extorted from the soldiery.‡ The title 'The sincere wellwisher and the hero victorious in war' was conferred on Dewan Chand.§

Ranjit then took advantage of the confusion following the murder of Wazir Fateh Khan in Afghanistan to make the first campaign on the right bank of the Indus. Feroz Khan, the chief of the tribe of Khattaks, had been instigated by the

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, II, pp. 211, 212, 217, 218.

† Lawrence—Adventures of an Officer, Vol. I, p. 258.

‡ Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, A.D. 1818.

§ Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, II, p. 220.

deceased Wazir Fateh Khan and invaded Khairabad had slain two Sikh generals in a battle. Ranjit Singh personally marched against him. The fortress of Khairabad and the territory on the opposite bank were secured. Ranjit then advanced on Peshawar. Yarmuhammad Khan, the Nazim, evacuated the city. Jahandad Khan, who had earlier surrendered Attock to Ranjit Singh, was appointed Governor but Ranjit returned without giving men and money to enable him to resist the dispossessed Barakzais. Two months after the Barakzais expelled Jahandad Khan.

The year 1819 was marked by the successful conquest of Kashmir. The Afghan garrison there had been much reduced by Muhammad Azim Khan taking away a large number of veteran troops with him to Kabul. Dewan Chand, the hero of the successful Multan expedition of the previous year, was the leader of the Sikh expedition to Kashmir. He led the vanguard of the army. A second army under Kharak Singh supported him from behind, while at a distance from the two armies was the Maharaja himself, keeping the rear and ensuring supplies. Rajori, Punch and the passes of the Pir Panjal range had to be occupied. The second army advanced to Rajori and the Maharaja with the third army to Bhimbur. Pir Panjal was forced and Dewan Chand advanced into the valley. Zabbar Khan, the deputy of Azim Khan, fought with 12,000 soldiers but he was completely defeated and was forced to fly first to Srinagar and through

Baramula to Peshawar. There was no pursuit. Kashmir came completely under Sikh sway within twenty-two months. Dewan Moti Ram was appointed Governor. Dewan Chand was invested with the title of 'Nasrat Jang or Fateh Jang.'

The next conquest was that of Dera Ghazi Khan in 1820. It was a dependency of Kabul. After Khushal Singh's successful seizure of this place, it was given in farm to the Nawab of Bahawalpur; the revenue fixed was about three lakhs.* The Nawab of Bahawalpur also held under Ranjit the fork between the Indus and the Chenab. In 1820, Ranjit's hold over Kashmir was consolidated. The hill chiefs were completely subdued. Katoch which was at one time such a powerful rival had by now become a client state of Lahore and Sansar Chand inspite of all his endeavours had not succeeded in securing the support and protection of the British Government.† He had now reconciled himself to his position though his territory was not annexed till 1828, four years after his death. His

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Part II, 1877, pp. 272-273.

† Pol. Proceedings, 4th May, 1816, No. 90.

'He has sought the protection of the British Government and has declared his attachment to it and is ready with a body of 10/12 thousand men to devote himself to its cause.'

'My object is to get my former possessions together with the fort of Kangra restored to me and the administration of justice left in my hands'—Sansar Chand.

Pol. Proceedings, 23rd October, 1819, No. 101.

'I am continually putting up my prayers that the auspicious day may arrive when I shall be favoured with an interview which will be a source to me of temporal and eternal happiness.'—Sansar Chand.

son and widow sought shelter in British territory, but his grandson was subsequently induced to return and got a jagir.

In 1821, Ranjit also conquered Dera Ismail Khan, Bhukur, Leeah, Khangarh and Moujgarh. There was very slight resistance; all the places were conquered without much difficulty.

Ranjit next advanced with his whole army upon Mankera. The Nawab had earlier given a heavy nazaranah of 70,000 rupees. But the Maharaja with a view to annex it, now went there with Dewan Chand. Two of the principal lieutenants of the Nawab went over to the Maharaja. The Vakils of the Nawab promised a nazaranah. Dewan Chand told them plainly that the Maharaja had come expressly to take Mankera. The Nawab should better give it up and have Dera Ismail Khan. This was reported to him. The Nawab agreed to give up Mankera and went to Dera Ismail Khan. Mankera was annexed and the Nawab of Mankera was thus made the Lahore feudatory of Dera Ismail Khan. Peshawar, however, was not annexed till 1834.

When we review the career of Ranjit Singh as a conqueror we find he depended more on diplomacy than on force. He was very cautious, discerning, relying more on cunning and conciliation, dissimulation and corruption than on his own armed strength. He does not appear to have been moved by feelings of pity or compassion. Widows and orphans were dispossessed as also rebellious chief-

tains. But he was 'more unscrupulous than cruel.' He knew that 'men ought to be either well treated or crushed, because they can avenge themselves of lighter injuries, of more serious ones they cannot.' Most of those chiefs whom he dispossessed and even imprisoned for a time were in the end given sufficient jagir to maintain them in comfort though not in power. To point out only a few instances we can refer to his treatment of Sahib Singh of Gujrat, his son Gulab Singh, Kutbuddin Khan of Kasur and even Sultan Khan of Bhimbur and his family. 'He has never taken life even under circumstances of most aggravated offence,' says Murray. 'Never perhaps was so large an empire founded by one with so little of criminality,' says Hugel. The circumstances of the rise of Ranjit Singh can be understood in their true perspective when we compare him with other chiefs eastern and western who raised themselves to high dominion. The history of imperialism, ancient or modern, eastern or western, is everywhere 'the wild and dreamlike trade of blood and guile' and the history of the rise of the Sikh monarchy is an exception at least to this extent that there were no bloody executions associated with Ranjit Singh's consolidation of his dominions.

Shahamat Ali in his book "The Sikhs and the Afghans" wrote much later—'An illegitimate son of Sultan Khan is in the service of Ranjit Singh and is in the receipt of Rs. 10 a day.'—p. 102.

CHAPTER IV.

ATTEMPTS TO ABSORB THE CIS-SUTLEJ MISLS AND RELATIONS WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.*

In the pursuit of his policy of absorption of the Cis-Sutlej Misls, Ranjit came into collision with the British Government, and was baffled. Up to 1806, he had very little to do with the British Government. We read in the Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh that as early as 1800, Munsi Yusuf Ali Khan came to Ranjit with letters and presents from the British Government. Then in the year 1805, Jaswant Rao Holkar and Amir Khan appeared in the Punjab in course of their retreat, closely followed by Lord Lake, the British General. Dewan Amarnath writes that Yaswant Rao came with two lakhs of soldiers and some cannon followed by Lord Lake with two battalions and guns. It is certain that the Dewan has exaggerated the number which Major Thorn most probably estimates correctly at 15,000. Ranjit hurried back to Lahore from the distant expedition on which he had embarked. From Lahore he went to Amritsar where

* On Ranjit Singh's relations with the British Government I wrote an article in the Calcutta Review, March, 1928. That article has been materially altered and incorporated in this chapter.

he met the Maratha chief; Lord Lake had also come up to Jalalabad near the Beas, in pursuit of the chieftain. The British general is said to have sent Raja Bhag Singh of Jhind to Ranjit, who explained to him in private the impossibility of fighting with the British and advised him not to have any friendly relations with Yaswant Rao Holkar. Ranjit Singh is also said to have convened a *Sarbut Khalsa* or council of the confederate Sikh Chiefs, to decide on the course of action. He, however, maintained an attitude of neutrality. The danger of the Punjab becoming the battle-ground of Holkar and the English was short-lived. Ranjit was relieved by the conclusion of a Treaty between the two combatants and 'friendly (engagements) were exchanged by the British Commander with Ranjit Singh and the Ahluwalia Sardar' (Murray).

In 1806 a quarrel broke out between the Rajas of Patiala and Nabha and Ranjit's help was invited by Bhag Singh of Jhind, who was the ally of Yaswant Singh, the Nabha Chief. Ranjit crossed the Sutlej, entered the territory of the Raja of Patiala, whose troops resisted. Patiala, however, submitted very soon and the Rajas of Nabha and Jhind also presented a nazaranah. In this Cis-Sutlej expedition Ranjit also conquered the fort of Ludhiana and other places. Ludhiana was, however, made over to Bhag Singh. Ranjit next went on a pilgrimage to Sri Juala Jiu in the hills.

Different versions are given of Ranjit Singh's second Cis-Sutlej expedition. It is said that Raja

Sahib Singh of Patiala advised by Raja Bhag Singh invited Ranjit's help against the Rani and the Kumar. According to another version, Rani Aus Kour of Patiala, in the rains of 1807 invited Ranjit Singh to espouse her cause against the Raja, promising him a brass ordnance and a costly necklace. Before Ranjit Singh reached Patiala the Raja and the Rani had been reconciled. The Raja was, however, forced to give up the two articles promised. According to a third version Raja Bhag Singh brought about the intervention as Rani Aus Kour, in alliance with the chiefs of Kythal and Thanesar, threatened him. Ranjit advanced up to Ambala and Thanesar and then retired northwards having done little to restore friendship between the Patiala Raja and his wife but receiving from both large sums of money. Ranjit next attacked Naraingarh. It was taken after much trouble. Naraingarh was given to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia; Mohkam Chand was given the district of Zira. Wadni in Ferozpur was conquered by him and was later given to Mai Sada Kour.

In course of his two Cis-Sutlej expeditions Ranjit took nazarana from Sahib Singh of Patiala, Raja Yaswant Singh of Nabha, the Afghans of Maler Kotla, Bhai Lal Singh of Kythal, Gurdit Singh and Karm Singh of Shahbad, Rani Dia Kour of Ambala, Bhagwant Singh of Buria, Jodh Singh Kalsia and all the Sikh Sardars of Sirhind. Tributes were also levied on many zeminders of the Cis-Sutlej region of whom Dewan Amarnath gives

a long list.* Ranjit had definitely embarked on his career as the conqueror of the Cis-Sutlej region.

His career of conquest produced consternation in the minds of the Cis-Sutlej chieftains. His greed for dominion was only too well known. In their alarm Raja Bhag Singh of Jhind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kythal, and Sardar Chen Singh, the Dewan of Patiala (according to Mr. Griffin the confidential agent) saw Mr. Seton, the Resident at Delhi, asking protection against Ranjit Singh. They could not get any encouragement.

In the meantime, fear of a French invasion by the North-Western route induced the Governor-General Lord Minto to send envoys to the Punjab, Afghanistan and Persia, the countries that mattered in the case of a French invasion by the North-Western route. Sir Charles Metcalfe met Ranjit Singh at Kasur with a proposal of defensive alliance. Before the negotiations had advanced, Ranjit Singh began a series of conquests. He crossed the Sutlej and stopped at Khai. The Vakils of Faridkot came to him and told him that Dewan Mohkam Chand had taken nazaranah quite recently. Ranjit, however, secretly appointed Karm Singh to capture the fort and it was conquered and annexed. Maler Kotla was next made tributary and Ambala was annexed. Mehtab Singh of Thanesar submitted. The Raja of Patiala exchanged turbans and

* This account of the second Cis-Sutlej expedition is based on the Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh Punjab Rajas and Murray's Account.

swore friendship. In fact, as the court historian of Ranjit says there was practically an earthquake in the Cis-Sutlej region as Ranjit's army arrived there.* Metcalfe had been induced to accompany Ranjit Singh up to Faridkot but he refused to proceed further. On his return from his Cis-Sutlej expedition Ranjit met Metcalfe at Amritsar where he was faced with the British demand that Ranjit Singh must remain confined to the right bank of the Sutlej and the country between the Sutlej and the Jumna was under British protection. Ranjit had planned to take advantage of the proposal for a defensive alliance and thinking that the British Government stood greatly in need of it, tried to extort the most favourable terms from it and with that end in view hurriedly conquered as much of the Cis-Sutlej territory as he could. As Lepel Griffin says, there was something of genius in his policy which deserved success. But in the meantime intelligence had been received by the India Government which made it no longer apprehensive of an invasion by Napoleon. Mr. Garrett opines that improved relation between England and Turkey, leading to the signature of the treaty of Dardanelles by these Powers in January, 1809, was responsible for the Indian Government's change of policy.† It was no longer willing to purchase an alliance of little value, at so high a cost. Instead of entering into this alliance

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Part II, p. 74.

† Garrett's Note—Cunningham's History of the Sikhs, p. 139.

it tried to limit the Napoleon nearer home, who had practically flouted the British embassy. The Government decided 'to oppose the extension on the Indian side of the Sutlej of an ambitious military power which would be substituted upon our frontier for a confederacy of friendly chiefs rendered grateful by our protection and interested in our cause.'* Troops under Sir David Ochterlony were sent to the Sutlej to back the British demands. Ranjit Singh was not prepared for this sudden change in the political situation. The serious attitude of the British Government, his own inability to meet the British power at this moment, his fear that the Sikh chiefs on this side of the Sutlej might also take advantage of the impasse and try to place themselves under British protection, combined with a defeat of a large number of Akalis by a small band of Metcalfe's sepoy led him finally to make up his mind. He suffered a diplomatic defeat and had to eat the humble pie. His ignorance of the European position of Britain as also the sudden turn of events brought about this discomfiture.

In all such disputes between two such military powers, the appeal to history is in reality irrelevant. But as both the powers advanced historical claims to supremacy over the Cis-Sutlej region, it will not be unprofitable to go deep into the question of right apart from might.

Ranjit's assertion was that as the head of the Sikh people and as the ruler of Lahore (by virtue

* Minute on proposal made by Commander-in-Chief, June, 1808.

of the recognition of Shah Zeman) he was supreme also over the Cis-Sutlej region. The British Government asserted, on the other hand, that the 'Chiefs have long been considered under the protection of the power ruling in the north of Hindusthan.' 'By the issue of a war with the Marathas the British Government became possessed of the power and right formerly possessed by that nation in the north of Hindusthan.

'In an early part of that contest communication was received from the Maharaja by the late Lord Lake which proposed to fix the Sutlej as the boundary—the British Government no doubt relieved the Cis-Sutlej states of tribute and subserviency but not in order that the forbearance of the British Government should be taken advantage of by another power.'*

In 1752, Ahmad Shah had obtained by negotiation the Subahs of Lahore and Multan,† and in 1756 Sindh. Most of the English writers admit that Ahmad Shah obtained from the Mughal Empire the country as far east as Sirhind.‡ Of course in the geography of Mughal India the Cis-Sutlej Sikh country was not a part of the Punjab.§ But between 1752-61 we find that Sirhind had ceased to

* From A. Seton, Resident at Delhi to Lt. Colonel Ochterlony—23rd January, 1809, quoted by Lepel Griffin in his book, *The Punjab Rajas*.

† *Siyar Mutaqherin*, III, p. 327.

‡ Murray, pp. 14, 15.

§ Sarkar—*Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I, p. 424.

be a Mughal province. In 1756 Ahmad Shah appointed Abdus Samad Khan Muhammadzai Hashtnagari as the governor of Sirhind and next we hear him appointing Zain Khan.* A combined attack on this governor by the Cis-Sutlej and Trans-Sutlej Sikhs was severely punished by Ahmad Shah, who inflicted a crushing defeat on them. But in 1763 we hear that the Sikhs defeated and slew Zain Khan, took Sirhind and levelled it to the ground. 'With the fall of Sirhind vanished the last vestige of imperial control over that portion of the empire of which it was the headquarters.' †

Ahmad Shah's hold over the Punjab and Sirhind had been further strengthened by the victory of Panipath in 1761 over the Marathas. We know further that after the *Ghula Ghara* or the great defeat of the Sikhs in 1762, Ala Singh of Patiala who had been taken prisoner by Ahmad Shah was released on an engagement to pay tribute and the title of Raja was conferred on him.‡ In 1764, Ala Singh even obtained a confirmation of his possession of Sirhind.§ In 1767, Amar Singh of Patiala obtained from Ahmad Shah, a further confirmation with greater honour.|| All these facts show that Shah Zeman could claim a *de-jure* sovereignty over the Punjab and Sirhind and Ranjit Singh could well argue that by virtue of the grant

* Indian Antiquary, Vol. XVI. Tarikh Sultani, p. 269.

† Ludhiana District Gazetteer, p. 269.

‡ Murray, p. 25.

§ *Ibid*, p. 27.

|| Lepel Griffin—Punjab Rajas, pp. 26, 33.

of Shah Zeman, he was entitled to the lordship over Sirhind. The assertion that the ' Sirhind chiefs have long been considered under the protection of the power ruling in the north of Hindusthan ' is not in any case borne out by the history of Ahmad Shah. The Marathas whose successors the British Government claimed to be, had no right in the real sense of the term and occasional plunderings cannot confer sovereignty. Moreover, Ranjit Singh might as well argue that the Malwa Sikhs formed a part of the Sikh Khalsa or commonwealth no less than the Manjha Sikhs and they had no right to secede and place themselves under some other power. ' He was only trying to mould the increasing Sikh nation into a well ordered state.'* He had not subverted the Sikh commonwealth, however nebulous it might be. He always acted in the name of the Khalsa. The conflicting claims of Ranjit Singh and the British India Government were about to cause a split among the Sikhs who in theory formed one united people. It is tempting to compare this failure to evolve one united Sikh military monarchy with two colossal successes in Europe and America. Had Austria succeeded in winning over the southern German states, German history would have recorded the failure of Bismarckism. The success of Lee would have marked the end of the career of the great federation of U. S. A. In a smaller sphere,

* Cunningham—History of the Sikhs, p. 133.

Ranjit's role was that of an unsuccessful Bismarck and Lincoln in one. His failure to absorb the Cis-Sutlej states was a tragedy of Sikh militant nationalism and the success of the Cis-Sutlej states with the aid of the British Government marked the disruption of the great creation of Guru Gobind Singh.

Ranjit Singh, however, thought it prudent to sign a treaty (25th April, 1809) according to which

1. The Lahore Government was placed 'on the footing of the most favoured powers'—the British Government having no concern with its territories north of the Sutlej.

2. Ranjit Singh retained the territories he had possessed on the left side of the Sutlej before the coming of Metcalfe, but he was not to maintain there more troops than was necessary for internal purposes and he was not to encroach on others' territories.

3. In the event of a violation of any of the preceding articles or of a departure from the rules of friendship this treaty shall be considered null and void.*

For some time there was even a correspondence between the Secretary and Lieutenant Ochterlony as to whether the Government would take a retrospective view of the encroachments of Ranjit Singh between 1803-1808. But the idea was ultimately given up.

* Appendix XXV, Cunningham's History of the Sikhs, Garrett's Ed. Life and Correspondence of Metcalfe, Vol. I, pp. 220-221.

Aitchison—Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, Vol. VIII, p. 144.

Let us now take up Ranjit Singh's relations with the British Government after the conclusion of the 'Treaty of Amritsar. 'Ranjit Singh differed from many other great eastern potentates in his statesmanlike recognition of the strength of the East India Company, the reliance he placed on British promises and his loyalty to his plighted word.'* This is the traditional estimate of Anglo-Sikh relations during the period 1809-1839. We have heard it repeated again and again that the highest proof of Ranjit's statesmanship was his fidelity to the British alliance. Ranjit in the north followed a policy just the reverse of that followed by Hyder Ali in the south. The latter was the life-long enemy, the former the most steadfast friend of the British Government. But the ultimate result was the same in both the cases—absorption of the kingdoms of both within the expanding British Empire. It is time to examine Ranjit Singh's claim to higher statesmanship based merely on his steadfast friendship for the British Raj.

The year 1809, the year of the conclusion of the treaty of Amritsar, marks the definite beginning of Anglo-Sikh friendship. That treaty confined Ranjit Singh's activities to the right side of the Sutlej, the British Government taking the Cis-Sutlej states under their protection. Thus the English alliance began by depriving Ranjit Singh of one of the most cherished objects of his life—the ideal of

* P. E. Roberts—History of British India, p. 27.

being the sole ruler of all the Sikhs. But at the same time it seemed to give him a *carte-blanche* so far as the region to the west of the Sutlej was concerned.

There were some doubts and suspicions up to 1812. A small fortress was raised by Ranjit at Philour, a town on the opposite bank of the Sutlej about five miles distant from the nearest British Station. It was placed under the superintendence of Mohkam Chand. It served as a frontier outpost, a station of defence and as a watchtower. It is even said that Mohkam Chand there received deserters from the British army to be formed into battalions, a plan which was very soon abandoned.* The British Government feared that Ranjit Singh, so disappointed, was actually carrying on negotiations with Amir Khan, Begum Samru, Holkar and Sindhia. On the other hand, there was even a proposition made by Rani Ram Kour, widow of Bhagail Singh for the support of the British power to a combination of the subordinate chiefs of the Punjab.†

Friendly relations, however, became well-established by 1812, and things continued satisfactory till 1823. During this period the East India Company was too busy with its own affairs, the Sikh chief was similarly employed and naturally there happened nothing of importance to test the strength of the alliance. The British Government

* Asiatic Annual Register, 1810.

† Punjab Government Records—Ludhiana Agency, Nos. 63, 66, 100.

was busy curbing the power of the Nepalese, crushing the remnant of the Maratha power, rendering the Rajput clans tributary; the Sikh chief was conquering Multan, Derajat, Kashmir, Peshawar and the hills and plains of the Punjab and reorganising his army. Both the parties were busy elsewhere and naturally 'the Sutlej continued to give freshness and beauty to the emblematic garden of their friendship and continued its fertilising way to the ocean separating yet uniting the realms of the two brotherly powers.' But with the Maratha confederacy crushed, the position and views of the English Government materially changed. They became the paramount power in India, east of the Punjab and Sindh. As Cunningham puts it, 'Ranjit had become master of the Punjab almost unheeded by the English.* Conqueror of Multan, Attock, Kashmir, victor of Hydaru, Naoshera, with generals schooled in European Wars, with soldiers, trained in the European fashion and flushed with victories, Ranjit now perturbed the mind of the British. He was now the most dangerous rival of the British Government in India and his power had to be checked and curbed. This is the key to subsequent history.

First, Ranjit's claim to Ferozpur was disallowed. Ranjit Singh claimed that the Sikhs of Ferozpur were among the oldest of his subjects. These were included among the dependents of Nihal

* Cunningham—History of the Sikhs, p. 180.

Singh, who was a vassal of Ranjit. When the Sikhs and Nihal Singh fell out, they established themselves under Baba Sahib Singh, who subsequently fixed his thana at Ferozpur and gave the Sikhs a fourth of their former revenue. In consequence of their giving some trouble Vakil Anand Singh wrote to Capt. Birch to have them kept in order. The Captain wrote on the back of the petition that the turning out or punishment of the Sikhs of Ferozpur rested solely with those having the care of the affairs of the Maharaja. In the time of Capt. Ross, a woman named Lachmi Kour presented a petition against Dhuram Singh and Khushal Singh to Capt. Ross, who gave orders to hand it over to the Vakils of the Maharaja.* The reasons which superseded these precedents and claims are set forth in the correspondence between the Government of India and its agents. Murray wrote, 'The capital Lahore is distant only 40 miles with a single river to cross, fordable for six months in the year. The post of Ferozpur from every point of view seems of the highest importance to the British Government, whether as a check on the growing ambition of Lahore or as a post of consequence.† In reply the British Government while declining the Rani's offer to put the British in possession directed that Ranjit Singh must not be permitted to obtain possession of Ferozpur under any pretence whatsoever. 'The Governor-General in

* Political Proceedings, 16th August, 1828, No. 6.

† *Ibid.*, No. 3. Extract from Murray's Journal.

Council would by no means be understood to reject altogether the proposition for an exchange but as the measure would doubtless excite alarm and suspicion in the mind of Ranjit Singh and perhaps not unnaturally be objected to by him as an encroachment on our part, the Governor-General in Council does not propose at present to accept the Rani's offer.* Ferozpur was, however, occupied in 1835, and in 1838 was made a military cantonment. That this loss of Ferozpur was regarded by the Maharaja as weakening his political influence with the neighbouring princes is evident from the fact that as a countermove in 1836 Ranjit attempted to establish a cantonment at Kasur soon after Ferozpur had been occupied by the British.

Next, between 1827-31 the insurrection at Peshawar led by Syad Ahmad kept Ranjit's energies confined to that quarter. The Syad was indirectly serving the British Government by keeping the restless Sikh Chief under check.† When the Syad was slain in 1831, Wade wrote to the Secretary. 'The Sikhs having finally achieved the extinction of the Syad who has afforded employment to their arms for the past five years nearly, are now speculating on the future field of their exploits. Their career has been one of continual warfare and with a large disposable army impatient of repose, His Highness will not be long before he directs his attention to

* Reply from Secretary, 30th June, 1824.

† This significance of the activity of Syad Ahmad was pointed out to me by Dr. H. C. Raychaudhury.

another quarter.* The British Government of course gave no help to the Syad direct or indirect, but connived at covert and overt help given to him by its own subjects. Metcalfe, Resident at Delhi in 1827 wrote to the Secretary, 'During the period of their recent attack on Ranjit's territories, the most fervent anxiety for their success pervaded the mind of the population of Delhi. Numbers quitted their homes and marched to join them including some who resigned their employment in the Company's service. It is said that the King of Delhi encouraged this spirit. If he did, the fact was not forced on my attention.'†

Free from the Syad, Ranjit now turned to Sindh. But the British Government was on the alert for Ranjit Singh was feeling his way to Sindh for some time. The British now forestalled him there. While the Governor General and Ranjit Singh were making friends at Rooper.‡ Colonel Pottinger was on his way to Sindh with a navigation treaty in his pocket. The Amirs very reluctantly agreed to a treaty that the rivers and roads of Sindh should be open to the 'merchants and traders

* Political Proceedings, 17th June, 1831, No. 41, Wade to Secretary.

† *Ibid*, 22nd June, 1827, No. 38.

‡ The motives underlying the interview at Rooper: The suspected designs of Russia made it desirable to give the world an impression that there was complete unanimity between the British Indian Government and the Lahore Durbar. Ranjit was also anxious to make the public believe that he was acknowledged as the head of the Khalsa by the British Government.

of Hindusthan.' Here, therefore, 'Ranjit Singh was checked in the guise of material utilitarianism.' 'But Ranjit had seen the beginning of those trading aspirations which by bestowing a power to interfere had led to the absorption of Bengal.'* Still he yielded on this occasion. But Ranjit recurred to his claims on Shikarpur and his designs on Sindh during the years 1834-36. He was, however, always hesitating. Finally the determined attitude of the British Government induced him to give up his plans. The Secretary wrote to his agent, 'His Lordship in Council cannot but view with regret and disapprobation the prosecution of plans of unprovoked hostilities injurious to the neighbouring states with whom the British Government is connected by ties of interest and goodwill.'† Wade wrote to the Secretary in reply, 'Looking to the extent to which he has already committed himself and to the impatience of his character when the gratification of his ambition is concerned, the restraint which my observations will tend to impose on the execution of his designs not only with regard to Shikarpur but other countries regarded by him as a fair field for conquest, is not likely to be palatable and cannot fail to awaken him to the *new lines of policy* which the British Government is determined to adopt.'‡ In spite of the exhortation of his Sardars

* Cunningham—History of the Sikhs, p. 193. (Garrett's Edition.)

† Government to Captain Wade, 22nd August, 1836, No. 55.

‡ Political Proceedings, 3rd October, 1836, No. 27, from Wade to Secretary.

to the contrary, Ranjit yielded once again. In return for this service the British Government extorted from the Amirs a very reluctant consent to the admission of a British Resident at Hyderabad in 1838.

Here it may not be out of place to discuss the importance to Ranjit Singh of the acquisition of Sindh. In the first place, it would have enabled him to open communication with other countries free from British control. Next, as Andrew observes, Sindh and the Punjab are provinces of the Indus, as Bengal and Bihar are provinces of the Ganges. They easily constitute a section, separated from all other parts by rivers, mountains, the sea or the broad belt of sandy desert. The physical and social characteristics of these two countries are identically the same. Under these circumstances we cannot but wonder why Ranjit Singh yielded to the British Government. It was his ready acquiescence on the Sindh question that enables us to realise how impotent Ranjit was so far as his relations with the British Government were concerned. The situation is not without its humorous side. Towards the end of the year 1836, Ranjit Singh wanted from the British Government 1,100 muskets and 500 pistols with their equipments complete and the remission of surcharge. The request was granted. Well might the Secretary write 'The dread in which he stands of our power may be accepted by us as a sure pledge that he will never suffer himself to oppose the views and

wishes of the government as long as we admit him to a participation of them as a friend.*

The English also tried to limit Ranjit on the west. As early as November, 1834, Wade wrote 'His Highness believes from the increased interest that we have evinced in the affairs of the Afghans, by the journey of Lieutenant Burnes into that country and his subsequent correspondence with its chiefs that he hopes to renew his intercourse with them that we are contemplating political relations with that country.'† It was even proposed to the Maharaja's agent in 1837, that Sultan Muhammad Khan was to be reinstated in the civil government of Peshawar while the military protection was to remain with the Sikhs. The Maharaja treated this outline of a plan with silence. Next in March, 1835, Wade suggested the recognition of Dost Muhammad, intimating the British desire to Ranjit Singh and requesting the Maharaja to be a party to the recognition. So far the agents were more eager than the Government itself. But in 1837 it was made known that the British Government would be glad to be the means of negotiating a peace honourable to both sides but that Peshawar was a place to which Dost Muhammad could hardly be expected to relinquish his claims. The Governor-General in his minute wrote, 'I have made it my object without obtrusive interference yet perhaps at the hazard of some temporary unpopularity

* *Ibid*, 19th December, 1836, No. 26.

† *Ibid*, 2nd December, 1834, No. 60.

with his chiefs and soldiery to induce the Maharaja to cultivate peace.* Matters would have progressed in the same way as in the east and south of the Punjab. But the intrigues of the Russians and the Persians and the Russophobe policy of the British Government led to a modification of the plan though by no means to any substantial change so far as Ranjit was concerned. The Tripartite Treaty with Ranjit as one of the signatories was concluded. Ranjit at first showed great hesitation and hesitation in his case really meant opposition. Ranjit was an unwilling partner in the scheme. He well understood that he was going to be completely enclosed. But he knew that he could not improve his position if he stood aloof. 'That Ranjit Singh was told he would be left out if he did not choose to be a party to the treaty does not appear on public records. It was, however, the only convincing argument used in the long discussion.'† 'Ostensibly Ranjit had reached the summit of his ambition, he was acknowledged to be an arbiter in the fate of that empire which had tyrannised over his peasant forefathers and he was treated with great distinction by the Lord Paramount of India.'‡ In reality, it was the most conclusive evidence of his helplessness and his own consciousness of it. He died before he had heard of the fall

* Minute by the G. G.—Pol. Proceedings, 11th Sept., 1839, No. 42.

† Cunningham—History of the Sikhs, p. 220, footnote.

Kaye—History of the War in Afganisthan, foot-note, pp. 329-30.

‡ History of the Sikhs—Cunningham, p. 221.

of Quandahar, before the British reverses had begun.

This is in brief an outline of the relations between Ranjit Singh and the British Government. Historians have gone into raptures over Ranjit's insight into the existing state of affairs. All their arguments reduce themselves into one fundamental argument that it is insight into what is and what is not possible that distinguishes a hero from an adventurer. Viewed in this light Ranjit is as much superior to Hyder Ali as a statesman is to an adventurer. Ranjit once said, 'I might perhaps drive the British (Ungrez Bahadur) as far as Allyghur but I should be driven back across the Sutlej and out of my kingdom.'*

Hyder Ali, on his death-bed, admitting his failure said, 'I might drive the British out of land but I cannot dry up the sea.' All that can be claimed for Ranjit on this point is clear-sightedness. But this brings us to another conclusion that Ranjit himself could see clearly enough that his own kingdom in such a provocative proximity, would ere long be absorbed within the British Empire. The logic of events was enough to convince him. He himself is once said to have remarked '*Sab lal ho jayega.*' But then what steps did he take to prevent this calamity? We know that though in the letters that passed between the Sikh and the British Governments

* McGregor, Vol. II, p. 35.

neither sun nor moon were spared to attest the stability of their friendship, yet the real basis of the alliance was self-interest and undoubtedly the British Indian Government profited by the friendship. Ranjit attached too much value to it and yielded on almost every conceivable occasion. As matters stood the British Indian Government could not have gained more if they had adopted a contrary policy. But we cannot make the same statement so far as the Sikh ruler was concerned.

Let us speculate as to what he could have done if he had lived to hear of the disasters of the British in the Kabul campaign. McGregor says in this connection, 'Had Ranjit survived to witness the English disasters in Kabul, he would readily have discerned that they arose entirely from local circumstances and in no way deteriorated from English prowess.'* But there is at least some evidence to prove that things might have been different. In 1837 Ranjit Singh was already making friends with the Nepalese Government. A Nepalese mission arrived in his court. It was cordially received and this cordial reception offers a marked contrast to his previous attitude towards Nepal. In the opinion of the British such an intercourse was inconsistent with British interests. Other states might follow the example of the Nepalese. Wade wrote to the Secretary, 'Ranjit Singh has hitherto derived nothing but advantage from his alliance with

* *Ibid.*

us. While we have been engaged in consolidating our power in Hindusthan, he has been extending his conquests throughout the Punjab and across the Indus and as we are now beginning to prescribe limits to his power, which cannot be supposed he will regard with complacency, he is now more likely to encourage than withdraw from alliances which may hold out to him a hope of creating a balance of power.* This cordial reception of the Nepalese mission is as yet the only thing on which we are to stand, if we conclude that if Ranjit Singh had been at the helm of affairs in the Punjab at the time of the Afghan disaster he would have taken advantage of the British difficulties the discontent of the Gwalior army and the hostile attitude of Nepal and other states towards the English. Though he had been impervious to the entreaties of the Raja of Nagpur in 1820,† to the persuasions of the emissaries from Nepal and other native states in 1824, and to the repeated requests of the people of Bhurtpore in 1825-26,‡ Ranjit would have most probably followed a different policy in 1839. After the Tripartite Treaty there was no longer any question of conciliation and alliance.

But leaving aside the 'had been,' let us judge Ranjit as we find him; Ranjit was the Massinissa of British Indian History. Massinissa created a state out of scattered elements only that it might be

* Political Proceedings, 20th Oct., 1837, No. 61.

† Political Proceedings, 1820, 2nd Sept., No. 17.

‡ Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, II, p. 329.

absorbed within the expanding Roman Empire not long after his death, so did Ranjit in his relations with British Empire. Both could create but none could preserve and both had presentiments at the time of their death that their creations would not endure.

What could Ranjit Singh have done? In his relations with the British Government in the last decade of his career, Ranjit is a pathetic figure, helpless and inert. But an alternative to the policy pursued by him, an alternative that would have been crowned with success, it is not possible to suggest. The English were too strong even for a nation of warriors like the Sikhs. Ranjit had made his kingdom too powerful to be left alone. Only another Patiala or Jhind would have been tolerated. But from the Indian point of view, though Ranjit, in his relations with the Anglo-Indian Government, appears to be superior to the contemporary underlings of the British power in India, yet he does not show any courage or statesmanship of the highest order. If he had really succeeded in establishing a balance of power, which was most possibly his own aim towards the close of his career, our estimate of him would have been different. But a statesman must be judged on his actual achievement. War with the British Government would have come sooner or later. Instead of postponing it to some future period, he could, if necessary, have boldly met the British demands with regard to Sindh by declaring war, though that

would have been at that time, as it proved subsequently, a hopeless contest. But he chose an impracticable alternative that of conciliating an aggressive neighbour that certainly did not look with equanimity on the military structure he had raised. Perhaps with the solicitude inherent in all builders, he feared to expose the kingdom he had created to the risk of war and chose instead the policy of yielding, yielding and yielding.

CHAPTER V.

RANJIT SINGH AND AFGHANISTHAN.

Ranjit Singh's relations with Afghanistan have three well marked phases—relations with the Duranis, with the elder Barakzais, Fateh Khan and Muhammad Azim, and lastly with the Barakzai Dost Muhammad.

The Durani monarchy gradually sank into anarchy and decay. The weakness of Shah Zeman (1793-1800) the misgovernment and indolence of his successor Shah Mahmud (1800-1803), made the government an object of general contempt. Shah Shuja (1803-1809) succeeded within a short time in bringing about the dethronement of Shah Mahmud but could not consolidate his own power. Taking advantage of these dissensions, the governors of the distant Indian possessions practically drifted away from the Kabul monarchy. Ranjit Singh also took advantage of this practical suspension of the Afghan monarchy and conquered gradually the Muhammadan powers on the left bank of the Indus.

Shah Shuja lost the Afghan throne in the battle of Neemla in 1809, immediately after the return of the British mission under Elphinstone. He advanced in the direction of the Punjab hoping to secure aid from some neighbouring power. Ranjit thought it necessary to get an idea of the motives of Shah Shuja. He was at this stage of his career

very distrustful of the motives of the British Government. He remembered the use he had himself made of Shah Zeman's grant of Lahore, and feared that the whole of the Punjab might similarly be surrendered to the English in return for a few battalions.*

Ranjit met the exiled king at Khoosab. But Cunningham writes that they met at Sahiwal. According to Murray the Sahiwal chief had accepted terms from Ranjit Singh on the 25th January, 1810. On the 2nd February, Ranjit received intimation of the approach of Shah Shuja. He met Shah Shuja on the 3rd February at Khoosab and Sahiwal was re-invested on the 7th. Murray is very definite about dates whereas Cunningham makes a very vague statement. It is more probable that they met at Khoosab rather than at Sahiwal.

The conference with Shah Shuja proved abortive. The Shah himself received offers of help from Ata Muhammad Khan, the Governor of Kashmir, a son of his old Wazir, and with his help he secured Peshawar, but within a short time he was expelled from Peshawar by Muhammad Azim Khan, brother of the Kabul Wazir, Fateh Khan. After some more misadventures Shah Shuja fell into the hands of Jahandad Khan, the Governor of Attock, who sent him to his brother Ata Muhammad Khan in Kashmir. In Kashmir, Shah Shuja was kept a close prisoner. In the meantime, his blind brother

* Cunningham—History of the Sikhs, p. 149.

Shah Zeman with his own family as well as that of Shah Shuja sought shelter in Lahore.

In the first Kashmir expedition undertaken in conjunction with Fateh Khan, Ranjit's general Mohkam Chand succeeded in inducing Shah Shuja to proceed to Lahore with him (March, 1813). In April, 1815, Shah Shuja succeeded in escaping from Lahore. He had already succeeded in sending his family to Ludhiana. During his stay in Lahore he had been compelled to give the World-famous Kohinoor to Ranjit Singh.*

According to British records, after his flight from Lahore, Shuja-ul-Mulk was well received by the chiefs of Rajori and Bhimbur. He raised troops at Rajori and talked of invading Ranjit Singh's territories. An army was sent under Jodh Singh Kalsia to oppose any attempt he might make.† An attempt was made on Kashmir and after its failure, the ex-king retired to Ludhiana.

Ranjit Singh wanted to make use of the name of Shah Shuja to facilitate his conquest of Multan, Kashmir and the Afghan provinces on the right and left banks of the Indus. That was undoubtedly one of the reasons why he wanted to keep Shah Shuja with him by force. But the flight of the Shah made that possible no longer.

Let us now take up the relations between Ranjit Singh and the elder Barakzais. Fateh Khan, the eldest of the Barakzai brothers, was the

* See Appendix B.

† Pol. Proceedings, 28th January, 1815.

Wazir of Muhammad Shah, the King of Afghanistan, whom he had set up on the Afghan throne. Towards the close of 1812, he came to Peshawar intending to punish his brothers Ata Muhammad Khan and Jahandad Khan who held Kashmir and Attock respectively but did not own allegiance to Kabul. The wily Kabul Wazir knew it quite well that if opposed by Ranjit Singh, he would not certainly be able to take Kashmir. Ranjit Singh also at this time did not consider himself strong enough to take Kashmir single-handed, in the face of the opposition of the Governor of Kashmir, on the one hand, and the Kabul Wazir on the other, with all the hill states not yet completely subdued. Therefore each wanted to make use of the other. Craft was pitted against craft. Murray says that Ranjit made the first overtures but in the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, corroborated by the *Zafarnama* we find that even before the marriage of Kharak Singh (February, 1812), Godar Mal, the Vakil of Fateh Khan, approached Ranjit Singh proposing a coalition against Kashmir.* Whoever made the first proposal, it was met half way by the other. Ranjit's chief motive in joining Fateh Khan was not so much the lure of a heavy money payment, nor the hope of getting Kashmir itself by some stratagem, as the desire to acquire local knowledge for future use. Another motive of Ranjit Singh in participating in this expedition was his eagerness to get the person of Shah

* *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, p. 120; *Zafarnama*, 1812.*

Shuja, the ex-king, who was a close prisoner of Ata Muhammad Khan of Kashmir. Wafa Begum, the wife of Shah Shuja, had taken shelter in Lahore and had promised him the world-famous Kohinoor in exchange for the release of her husband. The Kabul Wazir and the Lahore King met each other in an interview on the Jhelum. Burnes says that Fateh Khan was accompanied by all his eighteen brothers, who wanted him to consent to the assassination of Ranjit in course of the interview. 'One of them is said to have tendered his services by a sign during the meeting.'* But in that case Fateh Khan would have lost all his chances of regaining Kashmir. He, therefore, did not accede to the proposal. 'There was no question of moral scruples. The cool Sikh diplomat had most probably counted on the improbability of an attack under these circumstances, or he would have come prepared for the contingency of an attack. We know how suspicious Ranjit was when he met the Governor-General for the first time.† If the young Barakzais had taken it into their heads to attack Ranjit, a repetition of the episode of Afzal Khan and Shivaji would not have been unlikely.

Different versions are given of this compact between Ranjit and Fateh Khan. Murray writes that Ranjit agreed to help Fateh Khan with an army

* Burnes—Travels, Vol. III, p. 237.

† Ranjit Singh could scarcely dismiss from his mind the idea of treacherous behaviour towards him on the part of Lord William Bentinck.—Hugel, pp. 408-09.

of 12,000 (Wade gives the same number) under Mohkam Chand, and to give facilities for an Afghan march through Rajori and over Pir Panjal. In return he was to get the help of a detachment of the Afghans against Multan and 9 lakhs from the spoils of Kashmir. According to Cunningham, Ranjit had promised vaguely before the interview to help the Afghans even against Multan and a share in its spoils was promised in return. From Burnes we learn that Ranjit helped with an army of 10,000 Sikhs under Mohkam Chand. Most probably about the subsequent expedition to Multan nothing was practically decided in the conference and as Murray says, if there was any decision, it is likely, that the Afghans promised to help Ranjit in an attempt on Multan after the conquest of Kashmir. The *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* supports Murray's version though only partially. In course of a later peace-parley Godar Mal was informed by Ranjit, that if they were going to observe the terms of friendship they should pay one lakh of rupees annually from Kashmir, and according to their former promises they should get Multan for him and when they had satisfied these two conditions, the post of Attock would be handed over to them.*

Fateh Khan reached Kashmir before the Sikhs, occupied it, expelled Ata Muhammad Khan and then showed no eagerness to give the Sikhs the promised share in the spoils. Thus it appears that in the

* *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, II, p. 101. •

contest of artfulness Ranjit was over-reached by Fateh Khan. It does not, however, seem at all likely that Ranjit at this time wanted to get Kashmir for himself in the teeth of the vigorous Afghan opposition under Fateh Khan. Of course, he could not get a share of the spoils, but he had made use of Fateh Khan to get an easy introduction into the country.

The best Sikh general who was likely to be chosen as the leader of the future Sikh army of invasion, acquired a local knowledge which was sure to stand him in good stead in future. In other words, the Sikh general successfully reconnoitred the position. Mohkam Chand also got the person of Shah Shuja.

Murray says that an intrigue of Ranjit Singh with Jahandad Khan of Attock had been in progress even before the expedition against Kashmir was embarked upon. Ranjit had therefore left a detachment under Dya Singh in the vicinity of the Indus when he left for Lahore after the meeting with Fateh Khan. Jahandad Khan took alarm at the news of the success of Fateh Khan and the expulsion of his brother Ata Muhammad Khan and sent word to Ranjit asking him to send men to conclude a treaty and occupy the fort. Ranjit sent Azizuddin and the fort was occupied.* Murray says that the fort was handed over to Dya Singh and Azizuddin and others went to strengthen the hold.† He sent

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, II, p. 135.

† Prinsep—Origin of the Sikh Power, pp. 95-96.

orders to the leaders of the expedition at Kashmir that they should come at once before the proceedings at Attock were known and they should bring Shah Shuja with them. After their departure Fateh Khan learnt of the occupation of Attock and was very much annoyed.* Murray, on the other hand, says, that 'Fateh Khan cried out against the usurpation and deeming himself absolved by it from the conditions upon which he had obtained the co-operation of the Sikhs, he dismissed them without any share of the booty obtained.' The question is whether Fateh Khan heard of the capture of Attock before the departure of Mohkam Chand or after it. Mohanlal in his *Life of Dost Muhammad* writes, 'The Sikh General persuaded the Wazir to allow Golam Muhammad Khan to go with him. Golam Muhammad Khan insisted on his third brother Jahandad Khan to sell the fort of Attock to the Sikh Government.'† The version of Murray is different from that of Sohanlal. I am inclined to give greater credence to the version of the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* which is corroborated by a statement in the British records, 'when Fateh Khan heard of the affairs at Attock, he sent a detachment to attack the Sikh army under Mohkam Chand at that time retiring from Kashmir but the latter marched too rapidly to be overtaken.'‡

* *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, II, p. 135.

† Mohanlal—*Life of Dost Muhammad*.

‡ *Political Proceedings*, 23rd April, 1813, No. II, para. 7.

‘Ranjit Singh obtained Attock at the small sacrifice of a lakh of rupees and prepared to defend his acquisition.’* Fateh Khan left his brother Azim Khan as the Governor of Kashmir and marched on Attock. On reaching Hasan Abdal he wrote to the Afghans of Hazara, Yusufzai and Khatki that they should muster strong to fight the army of the Sikhs. He then closely besieged Attock; Mohkam Chand advanced with an army to relieve the fort. A battle was fought on the plains of Chuch in which the Afghans were completely defeated. The plain of Chuch is intersected by some small streams. By following the course of one of these streams, the Sikhs were in a position to quench their thirst in the midst of the heat of the day and this placed them in a situation of considerable advantage and proved to be a decisive factor in the campaign. Dost Muhammad, a brother of the Kabul Wazir, exerted himself to his utmost but to no purpose. ‘It only remained for Fateh Khan to retreat which he effected with honour and crossed the Indus previously burning some of his camp-equipage, but leaving the greater portion to be plundered by the Sikhs (July, 1813),† Dewan Amarnath also acknowledges the bravery of Dost Muhammad and says that he advanced up to the Topkhana. According to the Dewan 2,000 Afghans were killed.‡

* Burnes—Travels, Vol. III, p. 238.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Amarnath—Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, 1813.

The importance of the pitched battle on the plains of Chuch must not be underestimated. Hugel writes, 'The Muhammadan power was already on the decline in India, and the unimportant battle of Attock only drove the last bands over the Indus.'* This, however, is an entirely misleading view. What would have happened if Fateh Khan had been victorious? Attock would have fallen at once into his hands and the Muhammadans of Jhang, Sahiwal and the Sindh Sagar Doab, would certainly have once again acknowledged the supremacy of Kabul and the moral effect of a defeat would have been incalculably injurious to Ranjit Singh's sway over the Punjab. If Fateh Khan had been victorious on the plains of Chuch, he would without doubt have continued his victorious Indian career and with the revenues of the rich valley of Kashmir at his disposal, with the usual tribute from the Talpur Amirs, with a consolidated Afghanisthan, Peshawar and Attock in his possession, flushed with victory over the Sikhs, he would certainly have attempted to win back the whole inheritance of Ahmad Shah. The results of the battle on the plains of Chuch, if it had been an Afghan victory, might not have been as epoch-making as the victory of Tarain but it would have been no less important an episode in the history of the Sikhs than the Third Battle of Panipath was in the history of the Marathas. Ranjit's hold over the Punjab was not

* Baron Von Hugel—Travels, p. 212. •

yet consolidated and a defeat might even have been disastrous. As it was, the power of the Afghans collapsed altogether on the eastern side of the Indus and Ranjit Singh was left to consolidate his hold over it. Attock was strongly garrisoned and Gurmukh Singh, Sirdha Singh, Dewan Singh and Sarbuland Khan were appointed to guard it.

Towards the close of the year 1813 Ranjit advanced to the Indus. Fateh Khan came to Peshawar and the two enemies were watchful. Fateh Khan is said to have gone to Kalabagh whence he went to the Derahs. The Nawabs of Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan promised him help against Multan. The Nawab of Multan was at his wit's end. He sent Gulam Muhammad Vakil to Ranjit Singh and Ranjit promised him help if Fateh Khan crossed the river.* However, in the end the threats of the Kabul Wazir did not materialise.

The year 1814 is marked by Ranjit's unsuccessful attempt to conquer Kashmir from Muhammad Azim Khan, which has been described elsewhere. In 1818, Fateh Khan, the great Afghan Wazir, was blinded by Kamran, the son of the Afghan King Shah Mahmud and then put to death. With the death of Fateh Khan 'disappeared all the wisdom and cohesion' of the Afghan Government. The brothers of Fateh Khan took up arms. But Muhammad Azim Khan, the eldest Barakzai living,

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, II, p. 152.

was a man of moderate abilities, not equal to his mission and was moreover wanting in firmness. Mahmud had to take shelter in Herat. Muhammad Azim Khan hurried from Kashmir to Afghanistan to head the Barakzai rebellion.

Shah Shuja got an opportunity of regaining his throne. After Shah Mahmud had been expelled by Dost Muhammad, Azim Khan on his way from Kashmir to Kabul, invited Shah Shuja to ascend the Afghan throne with his help. The Shah consented but on the way he 'prematurely displayed his notions of royal authority by insulting some friend of his benefactor whom he considered to be encroaching on his dignity by using a palankeen.'* Azim Khan thought the choice of such a haughty monarch with ridiculous pretensions, as improper, deserted him, turned upon him and defeated him. Shah Shuja fled to the Khyber hills and thence to Sindh. Azim Khan chose Shah Ayub as his tool. Shah Shuja collected an army at Shikarpur. But his army melted away on the approach of Azim Khan and he returned to Ludhiana in 1821.

Ranjit Singh took advantage of the practical abeyance of the Afghan monarchy to make conquests on the right bank of the Indus and also to conquer Kashmir from Zabbar Khan, the Barakzai Deputy. Muhammad Azim Khan, however, succeeded in uniting the Barakzais under his leadership. He now wanted to compel Ranjit Singh to

* Burnes—Travels, Vol. III, p. 246.

retreat to the left bank of the Indus and to recover for the Afghans what they had lost on the right side. In 1823, Ranjit sent Azizuddin to demand tribute from Yar Muhammad Khan, a brother of Muhammad Azim Khan. Yar Muhammad Khan was the ruler of Peshawar. He gave a present of some horses as tribute to Ranjit. This further incensed Azim Khan who advanced from Kabul to Peshawar. Early in 1823, he entered Peshawar whereupon Yar Muhammad Khan sought safety in flight.

On hearing this news, Ranjit at the head of an army crossed the Indus and a battle was fought between the Sikhs and the Afghans at Noushera. The army engaged numbered about 20,000 on both sides.* Different accounts are given of what followed. According to Kaye and Mohanlal,† Ranjit won at Noushera solely by bribery, having won over Sultan Muhammed and his brothers and even Dost Muhammad. Azim Khan's hands were thus paralysed. His followers were disheartened and withdrew. Azim Khan was thereupon forced to retire. Many authors, Indian and European, mention, however, that an actual engagement took place. The number of killed and wounded on the Afghan side varies according to different accounts from 2,000 according to Wade to 4,000 according

* Wade—On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces.

† Kaye—History of the War in Afghanistan, Vol. I, pp. 117-18. Mohanlal—Life of Dost Muhammad. About the defection of Dost Muhammad, Moorcroft is silent. Vigne disbelieves this part of the story.

to Dewan Amarnath. Azim Khan had appealed to the fanaticism of the neighbouring tribes and given the war a religious character. But the fanaticism of the Akalis was pitted against the fanaticism of the Ghazis. The entire Afghan army was not engaged. A part under Azim Khan himself and several brothers was on the other side of the Kabul river and could not ford it and support the first division while it was fighting. Even after the inspiring courage and the brave death of Phoola Singh Akali, the Sikhs could not make a great impression on the serried ranks of the Afghan footmen. The Afghans repulsed four successive charges.* 'Seeing the doubtful nature of the battle and some hesitation on the part of his men, Ranjit seized a standard and proceeding with all his personal troops into the heat of the conflict told the Sikhs that Lahore was distant, and a retreat would be fatal to them. Inspired by his presence their drooping courage revived.† The Afghans yielded to the fifth charge and the Sikh victory was complete. As Ferrier notes Azim Khan's heart failed him. Otherwise he could have certainly crossed the river. The runaways found no difficulty in crossing the river, a detachment of the Sikhs also pursued them to the other side of the river. Azim Khan fled precipitately, leaving his guns and tents and Ranjit entered Peshawar. Shortly after Azim

* Ferrier—History of the Afghans.

† Wade—On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces.

Khan died of broken heart enjoining it upon his son to avenge the defeat. But it was all anarchy and confusion once again in Afghanistan. 'As the battle with Fateh Khan on the plains of Chuch decided the supremacy of the Sikhs eastwards of the Indus, this campaign established his power between that river and Peshawar.'*

From 1823, the year of the death of Azim Khan up to 1826, when Dost Muhammad became supreme in Kabul, Afghanistan does not count at all in Sikh history. The process of dismemberment of the Durani monarchy was now completed. Dost Muhammad got possession of Kabul, and of the other Barakzai brothers Sher Dil Khan took Quandahar and Yar Muhammad Khan, Peshawar; Shah Mahmud the Durani King was in Herat and the Sindhis no longer paid tribute. Even in Kabul Dost Muhammad had to reckon with the opposition of Habibulla Khan, the son of Azim Khan. The Barakzais were engaged in quarrelling among themselves. Even after Dost Muhammad had become well established in Kabul and Habibulla Khan had been worsted, he was up to 1831 too much taken up with internal affairs to mind the consolidation of Sikh sway west of the Indus. During this period he was engaged in his work of 'treading down the Durānis.'

In 1831, Shah Shuja contemplated another effort to recover the Afghan throne and sought

* Foreign Department, Miscellaneous, No. 206, p. 141.

Ranjit Singh's alliance. But the Maharaja wanted that in case he was successful, the Shah should prohibit the slaughter of cows throughout Afghanistan, deliver to him the gates of Somnath and his heir-apparent should attend the Maharaja with an auxiliary force.* Fallen though his fortunes were, the Shah refused to accede to these preposterous proposals which would make him practically the vassal of Ranjit. The British Government also refused to 'countenance or encourage'† the plan which fell through.

In 1833, the Shah once more attempted to regain the Afghan throne. But though he possessed the enterprise to commence, he had not the resolution nor the capacity to accomplish such an undertaking. This time, however, Lord William Bentinck 'suffered Shah Shuja to raise an army of invasion under the shadow of British flag.‡ The king even got an advance of four months' pension. He got a gun and some camels from Bahawal Khan and advanced upon Shikarpur. The Sindhis were hostile but they were defeated in an engagement at Rori and agreed to pay a contribution of 5/7 lakhs of rupees and to farm the Shikarpur territory for a settled annual sum.§ But Shah Shuja was routed by Dost Muhammad near Quandahar. After many wanderings he returned to Ludhiana* in March.

* Burnes—Travels, Vol. III, p. 248.

† Kaye—History of War in Afghanistan, Vol. I, p. 127.

‡ Political Proceedings, 21st October, 1831, No. 16.

§ *Ibid.*

1835. Before embarking on the enterprise, a treaty had been concluded between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja which became the basis of the later Tripartite Treaty. The articles were fifteen in number whereas the proposed treaty of 1831, consisted of 17 articles: the article that the Shah's hair-apparent should always attend the Maharaja with a force was waived. The proposal that the Shah should observe to send presents to the Maharaja at the *Naoroj* and *Dussera* was modified in such a manner as to obviate any open acknowledgment of allegiance to the Maharaja. 'Regarding Shikarpur and the territory of Sindh lying on the right bank of the Indus the Shah will abide by whatever may be settled as right and proper through Captain Wade. Nothing was spoken about the gates of Somnath. The ex-king recognised Ranjit Singh's sway on the right bank of the Indus over the Kabul territories he had conquered.*

Ranjit was actuated by a variety of motives in making this treaty with Shah Shuja. He wanted in the event of Shah Shuja's success to strengthen his position on the right bank of the Indus. He also wanted to anticipate any exclusive views that the British Government might have on Afghanistan. 'From the journey of Lieutenant Burnes into Afghanistan and his subsequent correspondence with the chiefs that he hoped to renew intercourse with them as also from the interest of the

* Political Proceedings, 2nd December, 1834, No. 60.

British in Afghan affairs, Ranjit surmised that the British were contemplating political relations with that country and he wished to establish a claim for himself to participation in any steps that the British might take to secure that object.*

Fearing that if Shah Shuja became successful, he might set aside the Treaty of Alliance, Ranjit wanted to make assurance doubly sure by annexing outright Peshawar which had been left to Sultan Muhammad as a Lahore tributary. In fact, Shah Shuja himself is said to have remarked that agreements are of no use, it is power that matters; that the document would remain in his pocket and he would certainly take back the Kohinoor from Ranjit and wear it.† The citadel of Peshawar was stormed by Hari Singh and Sultan Muhammad fled to Dost Muhammad. The Sikh army under Hari Singh and Nao Nihal Singh consisted of only 9,000 men. According to Vigne, Ranjit took Peshawar in 1835, not by force but by ruse whilst an amicable treaty was on the tapis.

Now that the danger from Shah Shuja had disappeared and a brilliant victory won over the ex-king, Dost Muhammad turned his attention to the recovery of Peshawar. Here we enter upon the third phase of Sikh-Afghan relations. When Shah Shuja was advancing in the direction of Quandahar on the 17th January, 1833, Dost Muhammad made a proposal for an alliance to the British Govern-

* *Ibid.*

† *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*, 1832.

ment. The reply of the British Government was that its policy towards the different chiefs contending in Afghanistan was one of perfect neutrality. We may, however, add that the neutrality was not without a perceptible tinge of benevolence so far as Shah Shuja was concerned. At the beginning of 1835, before embarking on his expedition against the Sikhs Dost Muhammad again wrote a letter to the British Government, complaining of the occupation of Peshawar by the Sikhs, announcing his resolution to wage a religious war against them and applying for the support of the British Government. He laid great stress on a passage in a previous letter of the Governor-General to the effect that 'His Lordship would give him a proof of the interest which he took in his welfare when the occasion should arrive.'* Dost Muhammad was, however, told that 'there was no promise of assistance in any of the late Governor-General's letters.'

Dost Muhammad made colossal preparations to measure his strength with the Sikhs. Ranjit Singh's capture of Peshawar deprived a section of the Barakzais of their possessions. His advance was a menace to the Muhammadan tribes of the frontier regions as well as to the Kabul monarchy. Political interest, religious sentiment, as well as the instinct of self-preservation impelled the Muhammadans to make one grand effort. He wanted to give to the struggle the character of a *jihad* or reli-

* Political Proceedings, 23rd March, 1835, No. 25.

gious war and assumed the title of *Amir-ul-Momein*.^{*} To meet the expenses of the impending war he seized the Shikarpur merchants of Kabul and took from them a lakh and half of rupees as a loan. The Quandahar chiefs were, however, disinclined to support their brother and his assumption of the title of Amir alienated them. Dost Muhammad also applied to the Amirs of Sindh for pecuniary assistance as it was too far for them to send troops. The Amirs feared the wrath of Ranjit Singh which financial aid to his enemy could not but evoke. Ultimately they demanded an *Ahad-nama* to secure the integrity of Sindh and the aid of Dost Muhammad Khan in the event of an attack on Sindh by the English, Sikh or other enemies. The Amir considered that the proposal of the Sindhians was intended merely to amuse him.[†] Letters were sent also to the Khan of Bahawalpur. The hearty enthusiasm of the Bajal and the Yusufzai chiefs in his cause encouraged the Amir. Letters were sent also to the Khatak, the Mohmand, the Khalil, the Khubar and other tribes in the vicinity of Peshawar. 'From Kohistan, from the hills beyond, from the regions of the Hindukush, from the remoter fastnesses of Turkistan, multitudes of various tribes and denominations came

^{*} The coin of Kabul, during the period of turmoil had been struck in the name of 'Saheb-i-Zeman,' i.e., ruler of the day. It was now impressed with the cognizance 'Amir Dost Muhammad by the grace of God.'

[†] Letter from Masson to Wade, 20th February, 1835.

flocking to the Amir's standard. Ghilzyes and Kohistanees. Sleek Kuzzilbashes and rugged Oozbegs, horsemen and footmen came pouring amain. The brave heart of Ranjit Singh quailed before this immense assembly.'

The troops assembled by Dost Muhammad by his own assertion numbered 40,000 besides the infinite multitude of the voluntary Ghazis

The Amir Daftars Probably	...	12,000
The Eljuri troops of Kabul	...	10,000
The troops of the Peshawar Sardars	...	1,500
The troops of Sadat Rahman Momund	...	1,500
The troops of Mir Alam Khan Bajore	...	5,000
The troops with Fateh Khan Panchtor	...	10,000
		<hr/>
		40,000

He had also 37 guns provided with 700 rounds each and had a treasure of 3 lakhs of rupees. The troops of the Amir were paid in advance. Large supplies of grains were also collected at Jalalabad. The Sikhs are commonly said to have had 80,000 men in the Peshawar valley about this time.*

It was a great crisis in Sikh history. Had Ranjit been defeated, he would most probably have been driven across Attock and the Muhammadan tribes on both sides of the Indus would have risen up in arms. The wily Maharaja resorted to diplomacy, a sphere in which he was always at his best.

* Political Proceedings, 25th May, 1833, No. 30.

He deputed Harlan Feringhee and Azizuddin to negotiate with Dost, so that he might gain time to concentrate forces as also to alienate from Dost Muhammad his Peshawar brothers. It was well-known to Sultan Muhammad that in case of Afghan success Peshawar would be annexed by the Amir. He was not unwilling to come to terms with Ranjit. He was promised Kohat, Tank and Bannu in Jagir for himself and his own brothers. Sultan Muhammad and Dost Muhammad had sworn on the Quoran to stand true to each other and the former Peshawar Chieftain was asked by Dost Muhammad to imprison and keep in custody the Sikh *Vakils* as pledges for the restoration of Peshawar. Mirza Samad Khan, Dost's minister, had expected that in case Azizuddin was detained, Ranjit Singh would be prostrate as the Faquir alone had the secret of the drug which was indispensable to the Maharaja and which upheld his failing strength. But Sultan Muhammad knew it quite well that Dost Muhammad would retain Peshawar for himself and only wanted him to compromise himself with the Maharaja by seizing the person of his envoys. Seduced by Harlan and Azizuddin, he withdrew from the Afghan camp with his soldiers and retainers and went over to the Sikhs. This defection had a very bad effect in the Afghan camp and on the morale of the Afghan troops. The two armies had been within seven *Kos* of each other. They had faced each other for seventeen days according to Dost Muhammad's own version. Ranjit Singh took ad-

vantage of the negotiations to mass his troops and almost surround Dost. Finding himself in this predicament, the Amir thought it prudent to retire in the night. His retreat, though precipitate, was creditable and even brilliant because he succeeded in taking with him all the equipment and stores. Thus Ranjit had gained a bloodless victory. It added to Ranjit's prestige and ensured his sway west of the Indus. Dost Muhammad suffered incalculably in public opinion and the disgrace of the retreat always rankled in his mind. His reputation was terribly damaged by his retreat before a race which he execrated, especially because he had pledged to carry on the war by the most sacred obligations of his religion. His great mistake lay in the delay which he made. He allowed himself to fall into Ranjit's trap. He began negotiations though he knew it quite well that his own camp was full of intrigue and treachery and delay might help his adversary. Though he tried to overreach Ranjit, he yet allowed him to mass his troops and having suffered an ignominious diplomatic defeat, 'withdrew his hand from the front of his reputation' * as Ranjit put it.

The Amir was very eager to wipe off the disgrace of his retreat and, as Masson informed Wade, he engaged to do so with the chiefs of Bajore and the principals of the several independent Afghan tribes. The assumption of the title of *Amir-ul-*

* Political Proceedings, 15th June, 1836, No. 38.

Momein pledged Dost to a system of perpetual hostility with the Sikhs. According to Malleson, Kaye and others 'In bitterness of spirit, declaiming against the emptiness of military renown, he plunged deeply into the study of the Quoran.' But he was soon roused from his abstraction. According to Mohanlal, however, Dost Muhammad had received repeated communications from the chiefs of the Khaibaris, demanding the despatch of some troops and offering him their co-operation against the Sikhs, stating that otherwise they would be obliged to acknowledge the authority of Ranjit Singh.* The Sikhs were fast entrenching their position to the east of Afghanisthan. It appeared as if they would take the offensive against Dost Muhammad. At Peshawar towards the middle of 1836, they were busy completing a fortress at Shubkudur, which would give them command of the road Gandab, next to that of Khyber the most practicable for artillery of all the routes across the mountain ranges between Peshawar and Jalalabad.† Ranjit Singh had given Dera Ismail Khan to Hafiz Ahmad Khan of Mankera in 1822. His son was now dispossessed. The direct annexation of Dera Ismail Khan at this time by Ranjit was a master stroke of policy. It was intended to threaten Dost Muhammad from a new quarter.‡ An agent of Shah Shuja was in Ranjit's court ostensibly of

* Kaye—History of the War in Afghanisthan, Vol. I, p. 136.

† Mohanlal—Life of Dost Muhammad.

‡ Political Proceedings, 21st November, 1836, N^o. 32.

course to recover some money due to the ex-king by the Maharaja's subjects but the Maharaja took advantage of his presence to propose to Shah Shuja whether he was prepared to give a written undertaking relinquishing Peshawar and Shikarpur and in that case the Maharaja would conquer Kabul and Quandahar for him.* Hari Singh Nalwa was engaged in building a fort at Jamrud at the very mouth of the Khyber Pass. The extreme views of that chieftain always advocating a march on Kabul were too well known even throughout Afghanistan. In the open Durbar there were talks about the intended invasion of Kabul and Khusal Singh's comment on hearing of the annexation of Dera Ismail Khan was that there was only a distance of sixty *Kos* between Tank and Kabul.† Letters passed between the two rulers whose tone was certainly not amicable. In Ranjit's letter there was the verse, 'Retrace your step if you desire not to make me your enemy; if other sentiments actuate your mind, remember that an army as numerous as the waves of the sea will instantly be with you.'‡ In Dost's letter the concluding verse was, 'I do not withhold my hand from soliciting favour but if you wish to destroy yourself, my sword is at your service.'§ .

* *Ibid*, 3rd October, 1836, No. 24.

† From the Newswriter to Wade—Political Proceedings, 15th August, 1836, No. 17.

‡ The Englishman, 10th July, 1837.

§ *Ibid*. .

The news from the frontier alarmed Dost Muhammad and he sent an army under his sons Shamsuddin and Muhammad Akbar to oppose the Sikhs at Jamrud. As much has been made of the Sikh defeat at Jamrud, we should study the history of that battle very carefully. According to Mr. Fane the Afghans numbered 18,000, the whole of Dost Muhammad's cavalry being present in the action. As Mackison informed Wade, Maha Singh, an officer of Hari Singh, had only 600 men with him at Jamrud when attacked by the Afghans. He sustained the attack for three or four days. Hari Singh marched from Peshawar to his help with 10,000 men and with 25 pieces of ordnance. The engagement began with a cannonade by the Sikhs, which had little effect. The Najib battalions then advanced and opened fire upon the Afghans, who retired in confusion from their camp leaving three guns. The Sikhs then began a plundering of the Afghan camp and their ranks fell into disorder. Akbar Khan saw this from a distant eminence and when Shamsuddin came with fresh troops, the Afghans vigorously charged the Sikhs and they retreated in disorder towards the fort. Hari Singh however, received a mortal wound in the melee. The main body of the Sikh army, however, rallied. 'The Afghans were not in a condition to improve upon their victory.*' The Sikhs threw up entrenchments in the night. The Afghans watched for five

* Mackison to Wade, 24th October, 1837.

or six days and finally retired. The number of killed and wounded on the Sikh side was about eight hundred; while among the Afghans the casualties numbered five hundred. Sardar Lehna Singh Sindhanwala had a garrison of 1,500 men at Shubkudur to the north of Peshawar. Here Hiji Khan Kakar and Mir Alam Khan had come with a part of the Afghan army. 'The Afghans placed great hopes on this diversion but nothing came of it.'*

But barren though the victory was so far as the Afghans were concerned, it cost Ranjit Singh that flower of Sikh chivalry, the Murat of the Sikh army, Hari Singh. It was the death of this great Sikh warrior which was responsible for making the battle of Jamrud a theme of exultation among the Afghans and it was this sad accident that cast a gloom over the Punjab. In itself the action at Jamrud was of no importance. The Afghans neither succeeded in occupying or destroying the fort of Jamrud nor in taking Shubkudur or Peshawar.

The Sikh-Afghan relations after Jamrud, between 1837-1839, are interwoven with Anglo-Sikh relations during this period and should best be studied in that connection.

* An opinion has prevailed that the Afghans were aided in their late operations near Peshawar by the presence of Mr. Harlan. It is a popular error. Neither he, nor any of the Europeans with the Amir was present with his troops—Masson to Wade. Harlan had been dismissed from Ranjit Singh's service and had joined Dost Muhammad.

CHAPTER VI.

RANJIT SINGH AND THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROBLEM.*

The North-West Frontier has always formed a vital problem and has always been of the utmost concern to the power paramount in India. In view of this fact, a past history of the attempts to solve the North-West Frontier problem of India has a living interest. Just before the British took into their hands the solution of this frontier question it was tackled by Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab. Thus a study of Ranjit's western frontier policy has some significance for those who are interested in it now.

According to Mr. Coatman, the Indian North Western Frontier problem is made up of four subsidiary problems :

(1) The international problem of the relations between India and Afghanistan.

(2) The political problem, *i.e.*, the problem of the control of the border tribes.

(3) The problem of the military defence of the frontier.

(4) The problem of the administration of the North-West frontier.

* On Ranjit Singh and the North-West frontier problem, I wrote an article for the Indian Historical Quarterly, September, 1929. That article forms the nucleus of this chapter.

The first question in this connection is, whether Ranjit had a mind to conquer Afghanistan? The arguments in favour of a negative view appear overwhelming. Ranjit had experienced disasters in his first attempt to conquer Kashmir owing to the peculiar local conditions. He no doubt dreaded the operation of the same causes in the event of his invading Kabul. Once in the year 1827, he had had a conversation with Wade, the British Agent, on the advisability of invading Kabul. About this interview Wade writes, 'I proceeded to remark that it would be a very hazardous expedition. The country is a strange one to the Sikhs, intersected by mountains and torrents not easily passable, it would be difficult to maintain his communication and keep his troops supplied—observations in which His Highness at that time expressed his concurrence.'*

Ranjit Singh himself once wrote in a similar strain to Wafa Begum, wife of Shah Shuja. Of course from both these persons Ranjit Singh had reasons to suppress his motives. But what do we actually find? If these considerations had not really weighed upon his mind, he would certainly have attempted the conquest of Afghanistan during the long interval of confusion in Afghan history between the death of Muhammad Azim Khan and the accession of Dost Muhammad to power. His French officers were too eager to march on Kabul and no less eager were the Sikh Sardars and

* Political Proceedings, 31st July, 1837, No. 23.

soldiers, but though he spoke of invading Afghanistan on occasions just to humour his Sardars and French officers and keep Dost Muhammad on tenterhooks, the mere warrior within him never got the better of the statesman. It was only on one occasion probably that he seriously thought of invading Afghanistan when Hari Singh Nalwa was killed in a surprise attack by the Afghans. Anger, pride and sorrow for a time overwhelmed him but when he regained his composure he thought no more of it. The opinion of the British Government in this matter should be noted. The Secretary wrote to Burnes, 'His Lordship thinks that though it might be hazardous and unprofitable to the Maharaja to seek to retain possession of a country so difficult, yet in the immense resources at his command, in his wealthy treasury and numerous and disciplined army, he has the means of overrunning it and of consummating at least the ruin of its present ruler.'* Ranjit was not, what he otherwise would have been, the last link in the chain of conquerors like Chengiz Khan, Timur, Nadir and Ahmad Shah. The temptation of pushing his conquests to the Hindukush, of avenging upon the Afghans the innumerable wrongs they did to his native Province, 'fulfilling the prophecy of the lawgiver in recovering the sandal-portals, an exploit which would shed a lustre on Ranjit Singh's actions'†—all these dreams he brushed away. He

* *Ibid.*, 9th May, 1838, No. 76.

† *Ibid.*, 15th August, 1836.

did not believe in desultory raids. What he conquered, he consolidated in his own way.

It may be argued against this view that the fact that he joined in the Tripartite Treaty to restore Shah Shuja shows that he was not disinclined to an enterprise against Afghanistan. But he was an unwilling partner in the alliance. He joined because he knew that the British Government was prepared to undertake the expedition even without him and perhaps he feared that with their phenomenal good luck and their immense resources they might succeed where he could expect nothing but failure. Yet perhaps he cheered his vexed spirit with the hope that the English would yet be baffled * as in fact they were.

Ranjit's North-Western conquests have two stages. At first he did not either feel himself strong enough to rule directly the territories beyond the Indus or he did not think it to be the proper policy. He conquered Peshawar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Kohat, Tank and Bannu but was at first content to rule these through the local Muhammadan chieftains, who acknowledged his overlordship and paid tribute. He conquered Peshawar but gave it first to Jahandad Khan, then to Yar Muhammad Khan and finally to Sultan Muhammad Khan as a feudatory. He conquered Dera Ghazi Khan, but gave it to the Nawab of Bahawalpur in farm and also made a pretended or real offer of it to one of the Sindh Amirs. From

* Cunningham—History of the Sikhs, p. 221.

Sultan Muhammad Khan of Peshawar, Ranjit used to derive an annual tribute of some horses and rice and kept one of his children as a hostage in his court. He subjugated Dera Ismail Khan, but gave it to the dispossessed Mankera ruler Hafiz Muhammad Khan as a tributary to Lahore. Tank and the neighbouring districts were made tributary in 1822 but not directly annexed. But not long after the disturbances from Syad Ahmad in Peshawar were over, we recognise a change in his policy. Dera Ghazi Khan was brought under direct rule in 1831, Peshawar in 1834; Tank, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan were directly annexed between 1832 and 1836. His territory extended from Mithankot along the right bank of the Indus to the hills of Bajour. From Burnes we learn of the extent of the authority of the Maharaja west of the Indus—‘He has no power beyond the plain country. The Derajat is under complete subjection, in Dera Ismail Khan the people are heartily disaffected. In the Esha Khyl territories the chief is now in rebellion. From Tank a more certain but varying tribute is levied. From Bunnoo nothing is procurable but by the presence of an army and north of it to the plain of Peshawar the country is entirely dependent.’*

So far as the problem of the control of the border tribes was concerned, Ranjit was only partially successful. Many brave Sikh officers met with death while trying to suppress tribal rebellions.

* Political Proceedings, 11th September, 1837, No. 39.

Diwan Ramdyal, Amar Singh Kalan and Attar Singh were among the number. Turbulent spirits like Syad Ahmad also chose the territory as the scene of their activity. Syad Ahmad or Mir Ahmad, who was originally in the service of Amir Khan, came from Bareilly in Hindusthan. With his lieutenants Moulavi Abdul Hai and Moulavi Ismail, he went to the North-West *via* Shikarpur and instigated the people to proclaim a *Jihad*. From Pakhli, Dhamtaur, Bangsad, Swat, Bunnoo and Tirah people gathered around him. Even Yar Muhammad Khan of Peshawar like a diplomat became ostensibly his 'murid' or disciple, called his troops and gave them orders according to the Syad's behests.* Syad Ahmad and Yar Muhammad were defeated by Budh Singh but the victory was not followed up. The Syad took shelter with the Yusufzais. With their aid he tried to take the fort of Attock but was repulsed. There were strained relations between Yar Muhammad and the Syad and the former was denounced as an infidel under Sikh influence. He was defeated and severely wounded. Ranjit wrote, 'By divine power Ventura who had gone to bring the horse Lily, with a small escort gave an asylum to the leading men of the place'† and the place was saved from plunder. Sultan Muhammad succeeded Yar Muhammad as the ruler of Peshawar under

* Dewan Amarnath—Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, 1826.

† Political Proceedings, 23rd October, 1822, No. 19—Ranjit to his agent at Ludhiana.

Sikh influence. But the Syad continued to give trouble, and on one occasion even succeeded in defeating Sultan Muhammad and securing Peshawar. But a disunion between the Yusufzais and Syad Ahmad forced the latter to retire from Peshawar. He retired to Pakhli and Dhamtaur and succeeded in exciting an insurrection in those mountains. There was even a danger of his attempting to take Kashmir. But as they attacked the Sikh position at Muzaffarabad, the Muhammadans were put to flight and Zabbardast Khan, a prominent ally of the Syad, submitted. The Syad proceeded to Melakot with a view to rallying his men. An attack made by the Sikh troops of Sher Singh at Dooble was repulsed. Shortly after, the Syad was surprised and slain by the troops of Sher Singh with 500 of his followers. After the death of the Syad, the Peshawar region enjoyed comparative tranquillity under direct Sikh administration. But in 1836, Mohanlal wrote to Wade—‘Active, though at present, concealed efforts are being made by a Muhammadan fanatic named Nasiruddin who has lately appeared in the Derajat for the purpose of exciting the population to a religious war. He is said to be a relative of the late Syad Ahmad.’* The danger, however, did not materialise. After he had annexed the frontier territories, Ranjit followed a policy not very different from that which was followed by the British Government in the years following the Sikh Wars. It can be called

* Political Proceedings, 6th June, 1836, No. 86.

‘ a tip and run policy,’ *i.e.*, when any particular tribe became too aggressive, committing too many raids, a military column went into the country, inflicted whatever damages it could and came out again. The mountaineers were kept down by a movable column constantly in the field. The prophecy of Masson made in May, 1835, that “ Peshawar is the land of Egypt, the tribes of Peshawar the children of Israel and Ranjit Singh Pharaoh and the river Attock would become Red Nile if a Moses were found to overwhelm the Pharaoh in it ”* did not materialise at any period of Sikh history.

The military arrangements on the North-Western Frontier were calculated to defend the Punjab against an invasion from Afghanistan, to prevent an *en-masse* gathering of the tribes and to facilitate the collection of tribute, where necessary, to overawe the tribes and to keep open the means of communication. Ranjit did not look beyond Afghanistan to Russia and stood in no awe of Russian advance. Burnes thus describes Ranjit’s arrangements for bridging the Indus at Attock. ‘ He retains a fleet of 37 boats, for the construction of a bridge at Attock where the river is only 260 yards wide. The boats are anchored in the stream, a short distance from one another and the communication is completed by planks and covered with mud—such a bridge can only be thrown across the Indus from November to April. Skeleton frameworks of wood filled with stones, to the weight of

* *Ibid.* May, 1835.

250 mds. and bound strongly by ropes are let down from each boat to the number of 4/6 though the depth exceeds 30 fathoms and these are constantly strengthened by others to avoid accident. Such a bridge has been completed in three days but six is a more usual period.* Peshawar was strongly fortified after it had been annexed. Forts were erected there at Sikham, at Machin; a line of towers at intervals of two *Kos*. connected that city and Attock. Forts at Attock, Khairabad, Shubkudur, Jahangira and other places guarded that region.† The most important fort in the Hazara region was that of Kushangarh.‡ There was a fort at Nara, one at Darma, one at Satna, one at Maru, *i.e.*, one fort for every Rs. 4,000 supposing that the Sikhs collected Rs. 70,000 or Rs. 80,000. In the south country were Narrai, Kron and other forts. The whole of the Dhoond, Kurrak and other mountains yielded no revenue. But unless overawed by forts, they became a harbour for all the bandits of the Punjab. Hari Singh Nalwa was killed by a surprise attack of the Afghans while building a fort at Jamrud. After his death a new fort was built nearby and was named Fatehgarh. The forts between Torbela and Darband were almost within sight of each other.§ But the most important part of his plan of defence was connected with the acquisition of Tank, Bannu and Dera

* Burnes—Travels, Vol. I, pp. 267-68.

† Extract of a letter from Masson to Wade, 26th January, 1836.

‡ Mackison to Wade, 25th November, 1837.

§ Mackison to Wade, 24th October, 1837.

Ismail Khan. According to Burnes, he seized Dera Ismail Khan in order to establish a connection along the banks of the Indus with Peshawar. But Wade remarks that the object was far deeper. 'The seizure was intended to threaten Dost Muhammad Khan from a new quarter less difficult of access than Peshawar, while at the same time protected the centre of the Punjab from any invasion of the Afghans when they might be employed in strengthening and consolidating their power in Peshawar.'* The Governors of the Peshawar region were able but ruthless administrators like Hari Singh Nalwa and Avitabile.

Ranjit in his civil administration of the North-Western frontier was concerned mainly with revenue and very little with justice, etc., though it is going too far to assert that 'To the day of his death he was carrying on war and plundering rather than governing the greater part of the country beyond the Jhelum.'† Ranjit allowed a great amount of local independence. 'Although acknowledging the Khalsa supremacy and paying all demands made by the Sikh Governor, each Khan was still a despot so far as the management of his little Khanship was concerned and imposed taxes, levied fines in many instances punished capitally without further reference. From the papers of Lachmi Prasad, the Dewan of Avitabile, we can collect details about

* Political Proceedings, 31st August, 1837, No. 69.

† Parliamentary Papers, Lt. H. B. Edwards to the Resident at Lahore, May 4, 1847.

the revenue and expenditure of Peshawar in the time of Avitabile.

Peshawar—

Revenue—

Nanakshahi	...	11,86,709	0
Goondas (rupees)	...	1,74,113	0
		<hr/>	
		13,60,822	0
Deducting $\frac{1}{8}$ for			
1,74,113 Goondas	...	21,764	5
		<hr/>	
		13,39,057	11

Expenditure—

Pensioners	...	9,898	0
Charitable lands	...	24,939	4
Jageerdars	...	6,20,590	0
Salary of Avitabile	...	50,000	0
Office establishment	...	7,087	0
Headmen of villages, district officers, judicial expenses	...	25,849	8
Ramghol Battalion (4,834)	...	2,86,827	0
Police corps	...	51,155	0
		<hr/>	
TOTAL	...	10,76,345	12
Deducting for Goonda (rupees)		2,263	14
		<hr/>	
		10,74,081	14
Balance in Nanakshahi (rupees)		2,64,975	12

This is exclusive of the expenses of the Kohistanee force of 6,000 men, of repairs of pub-

lie buildings, supplies in the forts, commissions, assignments, etc.*

• Bannoo Tank—

Revenue about 65,000 rupees.

The revenue was very often collected *vi et armis*.

Dera Ismail Khan, Marwat, etc.—

Revenue 6,04,686.

A comparison is often made between Ranjit Singh and Hyder Ali. In the Malabar Coast region Hyder Ali's position was somewhat similar to that of Ranjit Singh in the North-West Frontier. Physically the Malabar coast was indented, precipitous, full of mountain gorges and magnificent forests. The inhabitants, the Nairs and the Moplas, were like the Waziris and the Afridis of the North-West Frontier. There was very little cultivation. Plundering of peaceful neighbours was a common feature. The Malabar region baffled the military skill, activity and resolution of Hyder. The inhabitants rose frequently in rebellion. Hyder made terrible raids and left monuments of his

* Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 351, Sec. V, refers to revenue and expenditure in normal times.

Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records, Bundle No. Aa 15 (ii)—Official-in-charge Bakhshi Bhagat Ram.

The pay-rolls contained in the bundle relate to a division of the regular army stationed in Peshawar. The normal strength of this division consisted of seven to ten battalions of infantry and fifteen to twenty pieces of artillery of the regular army together with some irregular horse whose number cannot be exactly estimated. The annual cost of the maintenance of this division amounting to eight lakhs of rupees per annum was almost equal to the revenue of the province.

vengeance, established military posts only to meet with renewed resistance from the *jungle wallahs*. The Malabar coast remained the most vulnerable spot of his kingdom and was reduced rapidly by Hartley in the war with Tipoo.* Ranjit, however, met with a moderate degree of success in the solution of his western frontier problem. So long as the Sikh kingdom lasted, the frontier was defended against Afghanistan. The border tribes were not of course brought under direct control but that was not possible under the circumstances and they are still taxing the ingenuity of the British Government. So far as the administration of the conquered territory on the western frontier was concerned, he was not wholly unsuccessful. On the whole Ranjit showed more coolness in his western frontier than Hyder Ali in the Malabar coast region.

* Owen—Selections from Wellington's Despatches, Introduction. •

CHAPTER VII.

RANJIT SINGH'S RELATIONS WITH BAHAWALPUR, SINDH, NEPAL AND OTHER INDIAN STATES.

Bahawalpur—was a state on the left bank of the Sutlej and the Indus below its junction. On its south it was bounded by the territories of the Amirs of Sindh, on the east by the deserts and Rajputana, on the west by the Sutlej, the Punjnad and the Indus, on the north by the protected British territories. After 1815, it was also to some extent under the protection of the British Government. In 1833, a treaty was concluded between the East India Company and the Bahawalpur chief which established 'eternal friendship and alliance.' It was ruled by the Daudputras.

In 1807, when Ranjit Singh laid siege to Multan, its ruler Muzaffar Khan was encouraged by the reigning Khan of Bahawalpur to offer resistance but in February, 1810, when Ranjit Singh again besieged Multan the Bahawalpur Khan was lukewarm and did not send any help. The Khan wanted to be on good terms with the Sikhs. Even when approached by the chiefs of Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan, he remained apathetic.*

* Shahamat Ali—History of Bahawalpur.

In 1818, Ranjit conquered Multan and in 1821 the Derajat. After the death of Bahawal Khan I, Ranjit demanded tribute of his successor Sadik Muhammad Khan. He refused. A battle was fought near the fort of Tibbee. The Khan was defeated and had to promise to pay a heavy nazaranah. Sadik Muhammad Khan transferred the payment of tribute from the Nawab of Multan and the Nazim of Dera Ghazi Khan to Ranjit Singh when he became possessed of these countries. After the Derajat was farmed to the Khan the annual nazaranah was raised to two lakhs of rupees. The annual nazaranah had always to be exacted *Vi-et-armies*. As often as a military demonstration occurred 'it was the signal for the Khan's officers in authority on the opposite side of the river to abandon the country and cross over to their side leaving as little property as possible to be pillaged by the marauding invaders. A compromise generally occurred for less than half the sum demanded, when the Sikhs retired leaving the country each time less capable than before of satisfying the increased demands upon it.* For military reasons most probably the Sikh territory on the Derah frontier was dovetailed into that of the Khan of Bahawalpur.

Bahawal Khan III or Rahim Yar Khan who succeeded in 1825, continued to pay the annual nazaranah to the Sikhs. The revenue demand was

increased annually until it rose to a sum of five lakhs of rupees per annum. In 1831, Ranjit Singh annexed the territories held by Bahawalpur in farm and brought them under direct control. Ventura was placed in charge of these regions.

Bahawalpur never paid any tribute for its possessions on the left bank of the Sutlej and the Indus. In the arrangement for the distribution of tolls which was entered into, by the Sikhs, the British, the Sindhians and the Daudputras, Bahawalpur was also given a share.

Sindh.—The Amirs opened communication with Ranjit Singh after his first expedition to Multan, when he sent a Vakil to them. The Vakil had to proceed to Hyderabad by water; the tribes on each bank of the Indus fired at him but the river was broad enough to protect him. After the capture of Multan, Ranjit's fondest hopes were, as Cunningham puts it, in the direction of Sindh. 'The capture of Multan was the signal to the Amirs of Sindh to conciliate the good will of their potent neighbour.' * Envoys from Sindh presented themselves regularly before the Lahore ruler. The Maharaja also took the earliest opportunity of informing them that he expected tribute from Sindh which they were before in the habit of paying to the Afghans. He did not, however, persist in his claim. In 1826, he again demanded tribute from the envoys of the

* Political Proceedings, 20th, October, 1931, No. 70.

Amirs of Sindh. His assertion was that he had acquired the greatest share of the Kabul dominions and had succeeded to its rights.* Ranjit could very well argue that it was not so much the distracted condition of Kabul as his own success that had emboldened the Sindhians to refuse their tribute to Kabul. The envoys disputed the principle and the Maharaja did not press his demands.

It was with the year 1831 that we enter upon a new phase of Ranjit's relations with Sindh. Syad Ahmad, who had given him so much trouble on the north-west was now dead and the whole country from Peshawar to the borders of Sindh along the left bank of the Indus being now secure, the Sikh ruler was now free to turn his attention in the direction of Sindh. The Sindhis were of all people, perhaps, the most ripe for conquest. His steps in his advance in the direction of Sindh were quite well marked. When he had invaded Bahawalpur, his troops had been pushed to Sabzalkot, a frontier post of Sindh. Very fortunately he next came in possession of the Baloch provinces of Harrand and Dajil and this laid Shikarpur open. He then resumed Dera Ghazi Khan, hitherto farmed to Bahawalpur. Ventura was appointed Governor, with orders to build a strong fort evidently intended for a *place d'arms* in the intended preparations against Sindh.† Ventura also said that Shikarpur was dis-

* *Ibid*, 17th June, 1831, No. 41.

† Masson—Travels; Vol. I, p. 430.

tant only thirty *Kos* from the dominions of the Maharaja.

Sindh was, at this time, divided among three branches of the Beloochee tribe of Talpur—Hyderabad, Khyrpur, Mirpur. According to Pottinger the total revenue of Sindh was upwards of 50 lakhs of rupees.

Hyderabad	... 30 lakhs per annum
Khyrpur	... 15 lakhs per annum
Mirpur	... 7 lakhs per annum

But Burnes says that Hyderabad had only an income of 15 lakhs, Khyrpur 10, Mirpur 5 lakhs per annum and the total revenue was thus 30 lakhs only.

The military force of the Amirs according to Pottinger* amounted to 20,000 + 12,000 + 8,000 or 40,000 in all. The chief strength of that force was in cavalry and a more contemptible body could scarcely be imagined. Burnes,† however, observes that ‘ various surmises have been made regarding the strength of their army but they seem vague and indefinite, for every native who has attained the years of manhood, the mercantile classes alone excepted, becomes a soldier by the constitution of the Government.....the host to be counted is therefore a rabble.’

The Sindhians after the death of Muhammad Azim Khan had succeeded in getting possession of

* Lieutenant Pottinger's Memoir on Sindh.

† Burnes—Travels, Vol. I, pp. 224-26.

Shikarpur. It was a fortuitous possession and Ranjit thought that he had greater claims upon it as the successor of the Durani monarchy in this part of its empire. Shikarpur was his main objective in the south. It was regarded as the gate of Khorasan, was of the greatest importance to the Indus trade and it may be said that of Asia. It had a commercial connection with many remote marts. The possession of Shikarpur would lay Afghanistan and Beluchistan under tangible control. What was most interesting more than half the population were Sikhs and only about one-tenth were Muhammadans. Its land revenue was $2\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs and its duties were farmed at 64,000 rupees.*

The Maharaja thought it necessary to sound the views of the British Government. He told Wade early in 1831, that he had asked Sir David Ochterlony over their libations whether the British Government had any design of extending its possessions, who said, 'no, the company is sated' (*sair hogia*). He enquired of Wade whether it was still the case.† In October, 1831, when Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentinck met at Rooper, Ranjit did not make any direct enquiry of the Governor-General. But informally he asked the Chief Secretary some questions regarding Sindh with a view to elicit the views of the British Government regarding Sindh. But the Government was reticent. Even

* Political Proceedings, 1st July, 1831, No. 43.

† *Ibid*, No. 43.

though Pottinger was at that time negotiating a commercial Treaty with the Amirs of Sindh the British Government kept the fact concealed during the interview. 'As the project had been matured, it would have better suited the character and position of the British Government if no concealment had been attempted,'* especially because he was also to be a party to the opening up of the Indus. Ranjit Singh did not think it prudent to oppose the British Government on the point of the commercial Treaty and for the time being did not press his claims on Shikarpur and gave up his intended designs against the Amirs. But a commercial treaty meant that the English would have objections to Ranjit's disturbing the Amirs of Sindh and it practically amounted to the English taking the Sindhians under partial protection.

Ranjit, however, did not altogether give up his designs on Sindh. We learn from Burnes that one of the Talpur princes of Hyderabad, Noor Muhammad, cultivated a close friendship with the Sikhs. Ranjit also fixed a pension for an expelled Kalhora and kept him at Rajanpur beyond the Indus as a check upon the Talpurs.†

In 1835, Ranjit once again began to make preparations for an advance on Shikarpur and an attack

* Cunningham—History of the Sikhs, p. 193.

Metcalf's Minute—'It is a trick in my opinion unworthy of our Government.....it is just such a trick as we are often falsely suspected and accused of by the native powers of India.'

† Burnes—Travels, Vol. I, p. 231.

on Sindh. On the 29th September, 1835, the Maharaja held his Durbar, he presented a *khilat* to his grandson Nao Nihal Singh and ordered him to proceed to Multan to advance to Mithankot and to inform the rulers of Sindh that if they would agree to pay the Maharaja the tribute which they were accustomed to pay to the kings of Kabul, all would be well, otherwise Shikarpur would be occupied. Hari Singh Nalwa was directed to join the Kumar. A *casus belli* was also there; the Mazaris had attacked Mithankot and returned to their homes after taking a good deal of plunder. The merchants, too, complained of the unauthorized detention which they suffered from the Mazaris, a wild and lawless tribe, paying little obedience to any government, still considered among the nominal subjects of Sindh.*

The Amirs of Sindh were in great alarm, when Ranjit Singh seemed bent on advancing towards Shikarpur. They despatched a *vakil* to Dost Muhammad and also wrote to the Afghan chiefs by the way of Kohat on the Derajat. The Amirs, Mir Nur Muhammad Khan and Nasir Muhammad Khan, had a long private conversation and the two brothers decided in the first instance to assemble troops with a view to deterring Ranjit Singh's advance but in case that scheme did not succeed they would apply to the British Government for assistance.†

* Political Proceedings, 12th October, 1835.

† *Ibid*, 3rd October, 1836, No. 31.

Dewan Sawan Mal, the Governor of Multan, advanced with 2,000 men, 5 guns and 50 swivels and plundered the town of Rojhan belonging to Rustam Khan. He also took the fort of Kem on the Indus. The Sikh army was coming every day from Lahore to Mithankot and the Sindhians were assembling at Shikarpur. The Amirs sent a force of 10,000 horse and foot to Larkhana and their troops were mobilised from all quarters. Fifty pieces of artillery were also sent to that place. It was expected that an engagement would shortly take place between the two armies unless the Amirs consented to pay the amount of tribute demanded.*

There is no doubt ' that Sindh would have been invaded by the Sikhs had not Pottinger's negotiations for their protection deterred the Maharaja from an act which he apprehended the English might seize upon to declare their alliance at an end.'† Ostensibly in deference to the wishes of his ally, Ranjit let his relations with the Amirs of Sindh stand on their old footing. He was urged by his Sardars not to yield to the British Government and it is said that Dhian Singh in open court went so far as to call him a woman to his face.‡ But all this was to no purpose.

It is wrong to assume that Ranjit now gave up all his designs upon Sindh. He did not enter into

* *Ibid*, 28th November, 1836, No. 16.

† Cunningham—*History of the Sikhs*, p. 205.

‡ Vigne—*A Personal Narrative*.

any final demarcation of the frontiers. He tried to take advantage of the want of cordiality between the Mirpur branch of the Talpuris and the chiefs of Hyderabad and Khairpur. 'It has apparently been the policy of the British Government to overlook this chief while it has been courting alliance with his brethren in authority in Sindh, which has made them careless of their goodwill and a more ready instrument in the hands of the Sikhs.'* Wade thought it necessary to check the intercourse between Lahore and Mirpur.

Ladak.—The tableland of Ladak is in the Upper Indus Valley. Two-thirds of the people were Bhooteah hillmen and one-third Kashmiri Muhammadans.† The Raja's title was Geeapo. The entire government was in the hands of the Khalone or minister. The Geeapos were frequently changed and afterwards turned priests or Lamas. The troops of the Ladak Raja were mostly horsemen who used matchlocks, bows, arrows and swords. They numbered about 2,000. The infantry numbered approximately about 1,200 and used the same arms. The revenue of the Ladak Raja was approximately about 5 lakhs of rupees per annum but this revenue was paid mostly in kind.‡

The trade of Ladak was not inconsiderable, though almost the only stock in trade was shawl-

* Political Proceedings, 21st July, 1837, No. 18.

† Hearsey's Note, Vol. XVIII, 1835, Asiatic Journal.

‡ Journal of Gholam Hyder Khan, 1819-1825, Asiatic Journal, p. 170.

wool. Moorcroft wrote, ' It is not easy to make out the capital which passes through Leh but I find that Kothee Mull, a banker at Amritsar, has generally from two to three lakhs employed through the medium of Russool Joo, Azim Joo and other Kashmirees at this place.'*

Ladak had no relation with China of a political nature, had no connection with Lhasa save that which arose from community of religion, language, manners and close proximity.†

Thus Ladak was not an unprofitable country to conquer. After the conquest of Kashmir the next step would naturally be the conquest of Ladak. Major Hearsey notes, ' In the event of an enemy wishing to conquer Kashmir that place could always be invaded from the Ladak side and the task of invasion would become easier in the winter with the snow frozen and all the rivers and watercourses passable over the ice. The Sikh troops would not be able to fight at an advantage there in the winter. Neither their horses nor their horsemen would be able to withstand the cold.'‡ If this view of the military importance of Ladak in its relation with Kashmir was correct, it was necessary for Ranjit Singh after the conquest of Kashmir to subdue Ladak and maintain it as a buffer. Most probably

* Letters of Moorcroft, No. 1. Asiatic Journal, XXI, 1836, p. 132.

† *Ibid.* No. 3, June 11, 1822.

‡ Hearsey's Note, Vol. XVIII, 1835, Asiatic Journal.

other motives no less important than these were also at work directing his ambition towards Ladak.

It was no wonder that in the winter of 1820 when Moorcroft came to Ladak with a view to open up British trade relations and buy horses, the Ladak Government was very apprehensive of Ranjit Singh's designs. Moorcroft remained in Ladak for the remaining days of the year 1820 and the whole of 1821. He at first talked about Shawlwool and horses but very rapidly mutual confidence was established and the Ladak Government tendered its allegiance to the British Government, through Moorcroft. Moorcroft wrote to a friend, 'An outline of the principality of Ladak, as much details of the interior and exterior relations as may enable our government to appreciate the value of the subjection and the cost of protection have been transmitted to the political department.'* Thus Moorcroft's journey to open up Ladak to British trade might have become the thin end of a wedge and the same process of British expansion might have begun in Ladak as was later on repeated in Sindh. But even in the year 1821-1822 the Government had not yet become apprehensive of the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of Ranjit Singh. As it was the British Government disowned Moorcroft and tried in every way to quiet the alarms of Ranjit Singh.† Later on, when the British Government

* Letters of Moorcroft, No. 1.

† Political Proceedings, 27th October, 1821, No. 23.

became apprehensive of the power of Ranjit Singh, they considered its limitation in the direction of Sindh as more important than in the direction of Ladak. So Ladak could easily be conquered by the Jammu Raja Golab Singh in 1834.*

According to Wade, Golab Singh did this in order to strengthen his means of seizing Kashmir itself when the expected opportunity may offer and the Maharaja neither knew his design before the

* A letter of Guthrie, one of the unfortunate companions of Moorcroft, refers to the career of one Agha Mehdee and a Muhammadan assistant or servant of his and their activities in the interest of Russia in the region of Leh or Ladak. (*Asiatic Journal*, 1828, February, p. 157, dated, Leh, 1st August, 1821). Agha Mehdee had according to Guthrie come once before to Ladak with a view to secure Shawlwool goats in order that they might produce the material and manufacture Shawls in Russia. This Agha was originally a Jew, then he became a Christian. He was discerning and sagacious. He was so successful in his first mission that he was sent once again with introductory letters to the chief of Leh and other states on the borders of India and with valuable presents. After his arrival at Yarkhand Agha Mehdee became a Muhammadan and successfully baffled for the time being the designs of Moorcroft and his companions to visit Yarkhand. He then marched to Leh but on the way he died. His assistant arrived in Ladak but not being so sagacious as Agha Mehdee and being addicted to sensuality he squandered away the large sum at his disposal and gave up the intention of returning to Russia.

According to Mr. Guthrie, Agha Mehdee had imperial letters to the Raja of Ladak and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He thought that the Czar Alexander contemplated an invasion of China and as Ladak and Kashmir were localities favourable for the Russian army the friendship of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the chief of Ladak was sought. But as narrated above the plan, if there was any, fell through. The story is interesting though we are not in a position to say how far the surmises as to the political nature of the mission of Agha Mehdee are correct.

place was conquered nor approved it though he may not be inclined to reverse its execution.*

But Wade's statement that the Maharaja did not like the conquest of Ladak is contradicted by the fact that for a long time Ranjit's intention of invading Ladak was an open secret. Further, at the time when Zorawar Singh invaded Ladak, Dr. Henderson chanced to be present there. The chief of Ladak tried to make use of him and gave out that he was a British ambassador sent to ratify the Treaty that Moorcroft had entered into with him, though he knew that the Englishman was really an explorer. For three months the operations of Zorawar Singh were suspended. He informed Golab Singh and Golab Singh applied to the Maharaja, who in his turn referred to the British Resident at Ludhiana. The Resident assured the Maharaja that the British Government had nothing to do with Dr. Henderson.† All this would not have been done if Ranjit Singh had disapproved of the policy of conquest. He could have easily put a stop to the campaign of Zorawar Singh before it was successful.

A tribute of 30,000 rupees was fixed for Ladak. It should further be noted that Golab Singh was anti-British in feeling and most probably he wanted to extend his conquests down the course of the Spith until they approached the North-Eastern frontier of the Nepalese dominions and this might in near

* *Ibid*, 3rd January, 1838, No. 26.

† Hugel—Travels, pp. 101-02.

future lead to an alliance, resulting from direct intercourse which might be of advantage to both the powers. The wily one-eyed ruler most probably approved the plan of the professedly anti-British Dogra with some such ulterior motive in view. At least this is not an improbable view.

Iskardu.—After Ladak it was the turn of Iskardu, which was to the west of Ladak. The traveller Moorcroft wrote an ambiguous letter to its ruler Ahmad Shah holding out promises of British support. It fell into the hands of Ranjit Singh and he forwarded it to the British Government without complaint or comment. A duplicate, however, reached Ahmad Shah of Iskardu and that ruler, therefore, continued to expect British help. He took Jacquemont in 1831 as the successor of Moorcroft. When Jacquemont was in Kashmir a messenger came to him from Little Tibet with a proposal from the ruler to place his country at the disposal of Jacquemont. But the latter under the pretence of requiring an interpreter sent for the man whom he knew to be Ranjit's spy there.

In March, 1831, there was a conversation between Ranjit Singh and Jacquemont, which clearly indicated that the Sikh ruler had ambition in two directions—north and south.

Maharaja.—What conquests can I undertake at present?

Jacquemont—Any country of Asia not already occupied by the English?

Maharaja—But what province shall I first think of taking? Tibet? You have been there.

Jacquemont—Your Majesty would have only to send your Gurkha regiment but that country is miserably poor.

Maharaja—What is the use of conquering such a country? I want lands which are rich and prosperous. Could I not have Sindh?*

But as he feared active British opposition to his southward advance, he advanced northwards.

Ahmad Shah, the reigning prince, tried an alliance with the Company. The visit first of Moorcroft, then of Vigne, then of Dr. Falconer to Iskar-du, enabled him to postpone the evil day. The British Government's attitude was not very encouraging to Ahmad Shah. The Secretary wrote to Wade, 'No proper opportunity ought to be omitted of cultivating a friendly understanding with this chief but you must be careful not to use any expression which could excite in him a hope of our ever interposing on his behalf with any of his neighbours.'† But Wade's hints and intercessions on behalf of the

* Victor Jacquemont's interview with Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore. *Modern Review*, 1931, November. Translated by B. R. Chatterjee.

† Political Proceedings, 23rd May, 1836.

Iskardu Prince combined with the visit of Vigne and Falconer to Iskardu with no other merit than that of being Europeans, deterred Gulab Singh from invading that principality for the time. Most probably Gulab Singh connected Wade's hints with the visits of Vigne and Falconer and as he did not know that there was any difference of views between the Government of India and its agent, he thought it prudent to postpone his attack for some time and feel his way.

In 1836, we find Ranjit Singh in Kasba Jandiala, where Zorawar Singh, Jammu Governor in Kishtwar, responsible for the conquest of Ladak, waited on the Maharaja. Zorawar Singh gave a hint that Little Tibet was not very distant and its boundary was conterminous with the dominions of China. Ranjit Singh's reply was that the '*Padshah* of China' had always 120,000 soldiers ready to fight so that it would not be possible to fight with him. Zorawar's reply was that by the luck of the Maharaja they would succeed.*

Ranjit was not guided by a mere lust of conquest in approving the move against Ladak. He wanted to be the neighbour of the Nepal ruler. But the Maharaja deprecated the idea of any further advance that would bring him into collision with the mighty Colossus of Asia—China. He moderated the ambition of his overzealous deputies and lieutenants. After his death when Zorawar Singh took

* *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, III, p. 306.

Iskardu in 1840 and Garo in 1841, Ranjit's prophecy proved true. There was a collision with the Chinese, a Sikh defeat, English interference resulting in peace and restoration of the *status quo ante bellum*.

Ranjit had one great gift—a very fine and rare gift of high statesmanship—the sense of limits. His willingness to moderate his ambition is specially conspicuous in his relations with the Afghans and the hill states in the north outside the Punjab.

Nepal.—Prithi Narayan Singh, the first Gurkha king of Nepal, was a barbarian and from his death in 1775 until the usurpation of power by Jung Bahadur in the forties of the nineteenth century, Nepal was the greatest centre of political intrigues. Ever since the Nepalese War in 1814-1816, the Nepalese Court was trying to find out allies and towards the close of Ranjit Singh's life, a special effort was made to engage him in an anti-British alliance with Nepal. His great fascination for the Gurkhas as soldiers, his well-known disappointment of the British alliance, his conquest of Ladak, which made the Sikhs the neighbours of the Gurkhas, combined with the presence of a strong anti-British party in the Lahore Court, headed by the Dogra brothers, encouraged this intercourse. •

In 1834, a Nepalese agent arrived at Amritsar via Ludhiana. The nature of his interview was at variance with the avowed object of his visit. Wade thought it too late in the Maharaja's career and too

repugnant to his political sagacity to enter, except in the last extremity, into any sinister designs which the less sagacious chiefs of India might cherish.* He was destined to revise his opinion very soon.

In May, 1837, a mission arrived at Amritsar from Nepal composed of Kalo Singh and Captain Karbar Singh. They also talked of going to Kashmir. The British Government employed a person to accompany the party.† About a year ago a man named Ekku Shah Pandit had arrived in Lahore from Benares, with a present of two elephants for the ruler of Lahore, from the Nepal Government but curiously enough there was no letter accompanying these presents, at which the Maharaja had expressed his surprise. He had gone back from Lahore with two horses and some articles of furniture as presents in September. Wade thought that 'the affair was brought by intermediate parties as a prelude to a regular mission'‡ and this surmise was true. The regular mission came now in May, 1837. Bhopal Singh Thapa, son of late Amar Singh Thapa, was an officer in one of the battalions of the French Legion in the Sikh service. He was most probably a medium of communication between the parties in the two courts, willing to establish an official intercourse. His presence in

* Political Proceedings, 21st November, 1834, No. 154.

† *Ibid*, 12th June, 1837, No. 41.

‡ *Ibid*, 12th June, 1837, No. 41.

the Sikh army also enabled the Maharaja to recruit Gurkha soldiers for his army.

The members of the Nepalese mission of May, 1837, were at first treated with bare civility but very soon the Maharaja's attitude towards them changed. The members of the mission left no stone unturned. They addressed him in the most flattering terms as the lamp of the Hindus, an *Avatar*, etc. ' The Sikh chieftain replied in a gratified manner that he considered the interests of the two states as identical and invited a continued intercourse and presents of elephants from Nepal. Whether these sentiments were real or dissembled on the part of the Maharaja, they offer a strong contrast to the receptions usually given to the communication of the Nepalese before the journey of Captain Karbir Singh. Prior to that time no one ever came openly to Lahore from the Court of Nepal and if any one did arrive he was generally dismissed without an interview.*

Wade feared that if an intercourse was continued between Lahore and Nepal, other states might follow the example of the latter power and try to ally themselves with the Sikh Chieftain. Ranjit might thereby seek to establish a balance of power as against the British Government.†

But the most interesting episode in this connection was connected with Motabir Singh, a refugee from Nepal. In 1838, Ranjit Singh received

* *Ibid.*

† *Ibid.*, 20th October, 1837.

an application from Motabir Singh that he had been discharged from employment by the Government of Nepal, that he had come to Ludhiana and wanted to come to the Punjab. Captain Wade detained him. Azizuddin and Gobind Ram were asked to enquire of Captain Wade about Motabir Singh. Wade's reply was that the Governor-General objected to the secrecy observed by Motabir. He had permitted him to go on condition that he consented to be accompanied by an English agent. Ranjit told Azizuddin to report to Wade that he had no design relating to Motabir Singh but only wanted to see his '*Kaydah*' of fighting because he cherished the plan of conquering Kabul. Then if the Governor-General agreed he would appoint Motabir as a servant.*

About this time Nepalese relations with the British Indian Government were not very cordial and when in 1840 war with Nepal seemed imminent overtures were made by the British Government to Motabir who was then employed in Lahore and was a person of considerable influence in the army as also in the Durbar. The British Government wanted to support him in Nepal as a claimant for power or as a partisan leader. When the chances of a war vanished, he was cast aside. Ranjit Singh, of course, would have made a very different use of him. Smoothing over the differences between Motabir Singh and the Nepal Durbar, he would have

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. III, Part III, pp. 486-87.

used him as an aid to the establishment of influence in Kathmandu, with a view to establish a balance of power against the British Government.

We further hear that when the Maharaja fell ill in June, 1839, an illness which proved fatal, a confidential agent arrived from the Raja of Bikaner and he was ordered to wait till the Maharaja's recovery.*

Ranjit Singh undoubtedly approved of the conquest of Ladak, which made him the neighbour of the Court of Nepal. He was not an infant in the art of diplomacy, the last man who would be won over by mere flattery. Therefore his changed attitude towards the Nepal mission † marks a real change of policy. The embassy from Bikaner showed the potentiality of a new policy of balance of power. But before he could do anything, the Lion of the Punjab was surprised by death.

* *Punjab Akhbar*, 1839.

† *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*—The Nepalese vakils had been shown the fort of Govindgarh.

CHAPTER VIII.

RANJIT SINGH'S GOVERNMENT, INSTITUTIONS AND POLICY.*

The records in the Punjab relating to the civil administration of Ranjit Singh have not yet been published. In giving an account of Ranjit Singh's civil administration, I have, therefore, to content myself with what I can glean from the writings of contemporary authors and from the references to the previous administration contained in the reports of the British officers engaged in making a settlement after the annexation of the Punjab. Besides these, there are, in the Imperial Record Department, many contemporary and semi-contemporary records which contain information on the Punjab supplied to the British Political Agent at Ludhiana or by him to the Governor General. Though these do not refer generally to civil administration, yet much valuable information bearing on civil administration, can be gleaned from them. As my information is derived largely from the British official sources, whatever may be said in these pages in favour of the Punjab chief is certainly more valuable than it otherwise would have been.

* On Ranjit Singh's civil administration, an article of mine was published in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*, March, 1928. That article has been materially altered and incorporated in this chapter.

The history of the Punjab from 1799-1839, satisfied to a great extent, the ideal of a constitution pictured by Carlyle, 'Find in any country the ablest man that exists there, raise him to the supreme place and loyally reverence him, you have a perfect government for that country, no ballot box, parliamentary eloquence, voting, constitution building or other machinery whatever can improve it a whit.' But I make this statement with some reservation. Absolute he was no doubt, but there were some limitations on his absolutism. One great limitation was to be found in the living principle of a commonwealth. Some check was also exercised by the order of the Akalis, and by the martial nobility of the Punjab, though they were, to a great extent, restrained by him and then there were the common people possessed of arms. The theocratic commonwealth or the Khalsa of which each individual Sikh considered himself as a member, was a potent force and Ranjit Singh always showed due deference to it. Guru Gobind Singh had invested the sect with the dignity of 'gurudom.' The three factors of the religious life of the Sikhs were the love of God, reverence for the Guru and the ideal of a commonwealth. In course of the gradual evolution of Sikhism the first two had been merged in each other and when the personal Guruship was abolished by Guru Gobind Singh and the tenth Guru declared that the Sikhs would find the Guru in the Khalsa, the commonwealth became the most potent factor of the Sikh religious life.

A drum which Guru Gobind Singh had constructed was named Ranjit and the one-eyed Sikh ruler also professedly regarded himself as nothing more than a mere drum of the Sikh commonwealth for the assertion of the political supremacy of the Khalsa. He might have been absolute, but he always acted in the name of the khalsa. He did not assume the title of king but rather the impersonal designation of *Sarkar* to denote the source of orders. In referring to his government he always used the term Khalsaji or Sarkar Khalsa. On his seals he had the inscription 'God the helper of Ranjit.' Ranjit's deference to the Khalsa was not like the seeming deference showed by Julius and Augustus Caesar to the name of the Roman Republic, when they established Caesarism. The Senate was at that time, to all intents and purposes dead, whereas the Sikh religion was in Ranjit's time fully alive and the Khalsa a reality.

The Akalis were a product of the extreme interpretation of the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh in which he referred to 'Kirt-nash, Kulnash, Dharmnash and Karmnash.*' They did not own any earthly superior and represented in a peculiar manner the religious element in Sikhism. In addition to their other military activities, they acted as the armed guardians of Amritsar, took upon themselves the direction of religious ceremonies and also acted as censors of private morals. Their con-

* Glossary of the Punjab Tribes and Castes, Vol. I, p. 698.

tempt for foreigners knew no bounds. They were a standing menace to the stability of Ranjit Singh's government and embroiled him in interstate complications. The attack on Metcalfe's escort is a case in point. Burnes says that Ranjit had to place detachments of troops in the ferry stations on the Sutlej to prevent the fanatics from crossing over to British territories. They also took the law into their own hands and inflicted cruel punishments. Burnes also mentions a village to which the fanatics had put fire.* On several occasions they even made attempts on the life of Ranjit Singh. Yet Ranjit dared not crush them, though he had the means to do so. All that he could do was to moderate their fanaticism. They were formed into a band of irregular cavalry, retaining their own peculiar equipments and dress and when these fanatics began their ravages, regular troops were employed to bring them back. The Akalis were greatly respected by the Sikhs and partly because of this and partly because of his own superstition he dared not to defy the religious susceptibilities of his people and abolish the order of the Akalis.

When Ranjit Singh became the sole and supreme ruler of the Punjab, his aim was to keep his big Sardars under his complete control. He weakened all powerful chiefs by confiscations, fines and forfeitures. He did not approve of hereditary

* Burnes—Travels, Vol. I, p. 91. Ranjit Singh's 'purwana' to his officers "take most particular care that the Nihungs and such other wrongheaded people are kept at a distance."

wealth. When his officials died, he used to seize their estates, though normally he left sufficient for the maintenance of the family. We cannot find fault with this practice, from a political point of view, as feudal tenures were the bane of all governments. His big standing army overawed the nobility, the review at Dusserah of the troops of the feudal chieftains and the enforcement of strict rules of feudal dues gave him a hold on the troops in the service of the chiefs. The yearly review during Dusserah was like an annual Oath of Salisbury. The new nobles created by Ranjit Singh became a powerful check upon any lingering opposition that the old Sikh chiefs still cherished towards monarchy. But the fatuity of his later years was responsible for a lapse from this attitude of alertness and this enabled the Jammu brothers to firmly entrench themselves in the hills. He allowed too much power to accumulate in the hands of Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh who were in a position to seize Kashmir and to retain Jammu and a large district which extended over inaccessible mountains from Attock to Nurpur in the South-east and thence north to Ladak besides large estates in the Punjab.*

Moreover the Sikhs of the Punjab were soldiers to a man and Ranjit never attempted (and it was of course beyond his powers) to disarm them. It speaks much in favour of the popular character of

* Hugel—Travels, p. 288

the military monarchy. 'Patriotism' as Acton says, 'consists in the development of the instinct of self-preservation into a moral duty.' Fully armed and forming the bulk of the regular army, the Sikh people could not altogether sink into the languid indifference of private life. If military courage is democratised, as it was in the Punjab, the government cannot afford to flout the opinion of the people. It can ignore the masses only when military courage is the monopoly of a ruling caste or of an aristocracy, as the Spartans ignored the helots, as the feudal nobility ignored the commonalty of Europe in the middle ages.

Central Government.—The centre of the whole system, the pivot of the whole structure of government was of course the Maharaja. The direction of affairs lay entirely with him. At first there was no regular system of accounts at Lahore. The revenue was managed by the Amritsar banker Ramanand, who held the Octroi of Amritsar and farmed the salt mines of Pind Dadan Khan. Bhowani Das, a high revenue officer under Shah Shuja, joined Ranjit in 1808.* He at once effected a great improvement, established a pay office for the troops and a finance office, of both of which he was made the head. Gradually Bhowani Das arranged the civil and military business of the government into twelve daftars or departments. Bhowani Das received great assistance from Ganga Ram, who

* Lepel Griffin—The Punjab Chiefs, re Bhowani Das.

had served under the Maharaja of Gwalior. Ranjit placed him at the head of the military office and made him keeper of the seal. In 1816, when Ganga Ram died, Deenanath received charge of the Royal Seal and in 1834, on the death of Bhowani Das, he was made the head of the civil and finance office. Bhai Ram Singh, Gobind Ram and Fakir Azizuddin also assisted Ranjit in civil matters. The Fakir also acted as the Chief Secretary for foreign affairs. The letters of business were also frequently written by him. Though illiterate Ranjit frequently criticised and corrected the diction of his Secretaries. Misr Beli Ram was in charge of the Regalia and the Treasury. Khushal Singh was in charge of the Deodhee in which he was later replaced by Dhian Singh.*

From the financial point of view, the Punjab was divided into districts leased out, granted or directly administered. Deenanath is said to have remarked that "originally Maharaja Ranjit Singh had fixed money assessment for every village but gradually the system as he grew old had been subverted and that for many years there had been seven great districts—Cashmere, Peshawar, Wuzeerabad, Multan, Pind Dadan Khan with the salt mines, Kangra with a portion of Manjha and Jalandhar Doab and in these the governors did what they liked."† The affairs of the country were in the

* Shahamat Ali—The Sikhs and the Afghans, p. 16.

† Parliamentary Papers, Acting Resident to Secretary, September 25, 1847.

hands of three classes of officers—(1) Men of wealth, position and influence who were sent to the distant provinces as farmers of revenue—Hari Singh, Sawan Mal, Dehsa Singh, Lehna Singh, Avitabile and others. They managed the whole business connected with their territories and very seldom reported any case to the court. When they occasionally made any reference, the orders of the Maharaja were communicated by issuing Purwanas.

(2) The military chiefs who held feudal demesnes on the condition of sending contingents in the field had also unlimited authority within their jurisdiction.

(3) The Kardars or agents whose power varied according to the influence they possessed at the courts. The pay of these local tax-gatherers and other secondary officers varied and was mostly uncertain. It was tacitly understood that they were to live by the perquisites of their own appointments.*

Local Government.—So far as Lahore was concerned the Malladari system was re-established, every *malla* or quarter being put under one of its influential members. The office of the *Kotwal* or chief police officer was conferred on a Muhammadan. The village communities were left undisturbed in the enjoyment of their ancestral rights.

Financial Administration.—The arrangements for auditing of accounts were for many years defec-

* Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 356, Report of the Board of Administration, Lahore, p. 17.

tive. It was, however, not until late in the Maharaja's reign that financial order was restored. 'He trusted to his memory for remembering complicated accounts of expenditure and for many years periodically allowed the rough memoranda of those who were responsible to him to be destroyed.'* This state of the accounts facilitated embezzlement. Ranjit Singh knew this quite well. He therefore sometimes called upon his servants to pay him fees or aids and if they refused to disgorge, he would plunder them. This was not in many cases unjustified. When he confiscated the properties of his dead officials, he, in most cases, merely balanced his accounts. 'Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa used to pocket the proceeds of his frontier government by reporting constant raids by or against the Yusufzais, the result being that he accumulated eighty lakhs of rupees which Ranjit Singh seized on his death.'† 'Sawan Mal collected ninety lakhs of rupees in the space of nearly twenty years, though not engaged in trade or in any speculation in which rapid fortunes are made.'‡

Land Tax.—According to the Sikh system the government share was assumed to be half at least of the gross produce. There are instances in which as much as fifty-four per cent. was demanded.

* Parliamentary Papers, Acting Resident to the Secretary, September 25, 1847.

† Calcutta Review, 1844.

‡ Parliamentary Papers, the Acting Resident to the Secretary to the Government of India, Lahore, December 27, 1847.

Whenever revenue was collected in kind a deduction of ten to fifteen per cent. must be made for expanses, fraud and waste. Normally, however, the public demand may be said to have varied between two-fifths and one-third of the gross produce. There were various methods of assessment, Kunkoot, Batai, *i.e.*, appraisement or division of produce in the field also money rates and assessment per well.*

Excise and Customs.—Throughout the whole country there was a net-work of preventive lines. At the same set of stations excise duties, town duties, customs duties and transit duties were all levied without any distinction as to whether the goods were domestic or foreign. No distinction was made between luxuries and necessities. The whole country being intersected by preventive lines, both lengthwise and breadthwise, no goods could escape government duties for they were checked at least a dozen times in the custom and excise offices on the way. Even many agricultural commodities of the Punjab were liable to pay these taxes after their full share of the land revenue had been paid. Ranjit's taxation embraced 'everything, every locality, every thoroughfare, every town and village, every article wherever sold, imported or exported, domestic or foreign.'† This had at least one great merit. It was not uneven. Moreover, the customs levied were not so objectionable in their total amount

* Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 357, p. 165.

† Steinbach—The Punjab.

as for the worry and delay which they involved. The merchants frequently contracted with a third party for the conveyance of goods from the starting point to destination. The taxation by the chiefs could not be excessive and arbitrary, as in that case, the merchants would change their routes and convey their goods through the territory of a less exacting chief. In spite of the handicaps mentioned, commerce was in a flourishing condition.

There were in all eight salt mines of which four only were worked, their names being—Khur Chotana, Korah, Kerah, and Makraj. Gulab Singh farmed the salt mines. According to Agha Abbas Shiraz, writing in 1837—‘Formerly the tax on salt amounted to four lakhs, after the visit of Captain Wade the farm rose to 8/9 lakhs, afterwards to twelve lakhs, then to fourteen at which I found it.’* According to record No. 357 of the Miscellaneous Section of the Foreign Department, excise and customs returns under Ranjit Singh may be analysed thus :

	No. of articles.	Yield.
Imports	7	Rs. 3,62,697
Exports	19	„ 9,74,861
Imports and Exports	4	„ 1,37,739
Miscellaneous	18	„ 1,61,817
		<hr/> 16,36,114†

* Agha Abbas Shirazi—Journal of a Tour through Parts of the Punjab, 1837.

† Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 357, p. 219.

To this should be added the taxes from salt monopoly, approximately 8,00,000 rupees. This brings the total customs revenue approximately to 24,00,000 rupees.

Ranjit Singh, of course, did not understand the advantage of doing away with internal barriers. But we should not find fault with him when we consider the environment in which he was brought up, his want of education, and his ignorance of the principles of political economy. That his government did not really intend to oppress will be apparent from the following extracts :—

‘ Last year owing to the effects of the famine, grain was distributed to the zeminders and others both for sowing and subsistence.’*

‘ Kharak Singh was ordered to proceed to Multan and to take care that the cultivation along the way was not damaged by the people.’†

‘ Remission of the rent of Rs. 5,000 was made in the case of Rotas for the continuance of the Maharaja’s camp.’‡

We learn from Dewan Amarnath that when Khushal Singh brought a sum of money from Kashmir in 1833 Ranjit expressed great surprise and told him that in view of the great famine in Kashmir there would have been no dereliction of duty if he had brought no money. He then sent

* Political Proceedings, 31st May, 1836, No. 57.

† *Ibid.*, 29th August, 1836, No. 57.

‡ *Ibid.*, 7th August, 1837, No. 94.

to Kashmir thousands of asses with wheat and made arrangements for the distribution of corn from the *masjids* as well as the *mandirs*.^{*} Conscious that the stain of the misrule of Khushal Singh would ever remain on his government, Ranjit tried in every way to improve the state of things. 'He directed four companies of Sepoys to collect all the Kashmir people in the plain outside the city and they would each receive until further orders two seers of coarse flour, that as soon as the whole were assembled from the adjacent country, they would be escorted back and blankets and largesses would be distributed on their arrival there.†

M. Ventura was ordered to reach Peshawar with all possible haste to make M. Avitabile return the two hundred rupees he had unjustly taken as a fine from the Khutrees of the place and rebuild at his expense, not exceeding 15,000 rupees, the houses of the people demolished by him.‡

After the capture of Multan, Ranjit Singh 'began to encourage the silk manufacture of the city. He began to make presents of Multan silk goods at his court and thus their consumption was greatly encouraged. It became fashionable among the Sardars to wear sashes and scarfs of Multan silk.'§ Ranjit once proposed to despatch 30/35 boats *via* Bombay, with the produce of the Punjab

* Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, 1833.

† The Englishman, December 25, 1833.

‡ Punjab Akhbar, 10th March, 1839.

• § Burnes—Travels, Vol. I, p. 96.

to try what market they would find. Ranjit also showed much desire to promote the prosperity of his subjects, to induce them to extend their trading operations turning the treaty regarding the navigation of the Indus to the best account,* and Wade himself admits that he was well inclined to the interests of the merchant so far as his 'limited ideas in the sphere of commerce and industry would allow.'†

Finally we should note one thing in particular about Ranjit Singh's financial administration. The revenues of the country might have been strained by his system of taxation but in some respects the government gave back with one hand what it took with the other. The employments of the state were numerous and every Jat village sent recruits for the army, who sent their savings home. Village life had not ceased to be attractive and most of those who had come to Lahore and Amritsar had their families in villages. Many a village paid half its revenue from the earnings of these military men. Again, the presence of a vast army created an immense demand for manufacture and commerce could thus bear up against heavy taxation. The growth of the flourishing commercial city of Amritsar is a case in point.

Judicial Administration.—There were no special officers for the dispensation of civil justice or for the execution of criminal law. The chiefs generally

* Political Proceedings, 9th November, 1837.

† *Ibid.*, 21st November, 1836, No. 30.

judged both civil and criminal cases and thus no regular Courts of Law were required.

There was no written law. Still some sort of justice was dealt out. 'Private property in land, the relative rights of land-holders and cultivators, the corporate capacity of village communities were all recognised. Under the direction of local authorities, private arbitration was extensively resorted to. The Quazis and Quanungoes exercised privately and indirectly those functions which had descended to them since the Imperial times. The former continued to ordain marriage ceremonies, to register testaments and attest deeds, the latter to declare recorded facts and expound local customs.'*

The Maharaja made extensive tours and he heard appeals; he generally severely rebuked the governors of those regions in which too many appeals were made. He also heard appeals in courts. Justice was not so much a national as a local concern. It was left to the feudatories, but as these were men of the locality, they could not go far. 'Custom and caprice were the substitutes for legal codes.' Fines were levied in almost all cases. Imprisonments were unknown and capital punishments were rare. In distant and disturbed provinces like Peshawar and Hazara, however, the case was different.†

Many defects there were undoubtedly in Ranjit's judicial administration and police system,

* Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 356, p. 21.

† *Ibid.*

but to his credit it must be acknowledged, if Masson (writing in 1826) is to be believed, that the predatory propensity of the Sikhs was to a great extent kept under restraint. 'Time was that a Sikh and a robber were synonymous terms, now few thefts are heard of and seldom or ever those wholesale forays to which the chiefs were so much addicted.* On the testimony of Hugel we can assert that the Punjab was even safer than Hindusthan, then under British sovereignty. The Maharaja compelled every village near which a robbery took place to a very strict account and they were made to pay the value of the stolen goods.

Diplomatic service.—By an arrangement with the British Government, Ranjit had a news-writer, Lala Kissen Chand at Ludhiana, and the British Government had also a news-writer at Lahore. Ranjit was also supplied with political information from Afghanistan and Sindh. He had also news-writers in almost all the important places of his realm. These news-writers reported independently of the Kardars, the jagirdars or the Governors and sometimes even reported against them. They served as a great check upon the local agents. The most important of the diplomats of the Lahore Court was Fakir Azizuddin, who was employed by Ranjit Singh in all his important international transactions. Azizuddin who was sent on a complimentary mission to Lord William Bentinck in

* Masson—Travels, Vol. I, p. 426.

1831, and who also played a prominent part in the two interviews of Ranjit with Bentinck and with Auckland, was one of the two agents who deluded Dost Muhammad in May, 1835. Harlan Feringhee was also for some time in the diplomatic service of Ranjit. He assisted Azizuddin in deluding and disgracing Dost in May, 1835. According to Elphinstone even in the days of Ahmad Shah Abdali one of the defects of the Afghan government was that it had little information about the neighbouring states. The Sikh ruler, personally, was one of the most well informed of men and his government was quite well acquainted with the affairs of the country it was interested in. 'His curiosity is in striking contrast to the general apathy of the nation,' so wrote a foreign observer.

In making an estimate of Ranjit Singh's civil administration, we should note in particular the relations between his government and the Muhammadan subjects. As early as 1801, we find Ranjit Singh nominating Kazi Nazimuddin as the head of all the Muhammadans who recognised his government. Mufti Muhammad Shah was appointed as his adviser in matters relating to mortgages, sales and contracts. Imam Bux was made the head of the city police. He had many trusted Muhammadan officers, Azizuddin, Nuruddin, Mian Ghouse Khan and others. During a great part of Ranjit Singh's reign the custodian of the celebrated Sikh fort at Gobindgarh in Amritsar was Imamuddin. When Ranjit appointed Nuruddin as the Governor

of Gujrat and its neighbourhood, the high-caste Hindus with the sacred thread protested against this but to no purpose.* The great Sikh ruler was superior to communal prejudices. He even publicly expressed his regard for Muhammadan saints. His custom was to favour the Syads in the matter of assessment.† As Masson says, the only hardship of which the Muhammadans had to complain was the interdiction of the Azan. Considering the grievances of the Sikhs against their Muhammadan oppressors, it was certainly very creditable that the Sikh government were so forbearing.

In this connection we should further note the following incident:—On the 20th August, 1825, Mirza Bagun Beg, '*Kumidane Top Khana*' with others approached Ranjit Singh and protested to him on behalf of his Muhammadan officers against his order that there must not be any '*Tazia*' on the street in connection with the Mohurram festival. He pleaded in favour of the Muhammadans that they had been taking out *Tazias* from time immemorial. He further submitted that if the Maharaja had any prejudice against the Muhammadans he should first dismiss his Muhammadan officers. The Maharaja told them to build '*Tazias*' in their own houses but not to exhibit them in public. Ranjit Singh then asked Azizuddin whether he too expressed sorrow in that fashion at

* Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, 1809, p. 54.

† The Resident to Lieutenant Edwards, 13th November, 1847. °

the time of the Mohurram. Azizuddin replied in the negative.

Two days after Kharak Singh told Ranjit Singh in the open durbar that the Muhammadans of the town and the Muhammadan soldiers of the Maharaja were very dissatisfied because they had been ordered not to take out '*Tazias*' in the streets. The Maharaja then gave orders to the Kotwal to proclaim that any one willing to take out '*Tazias*' could do so and the Maharaja would not object.* It was of course the force of Muhammadan public opinion that compelled the Maharaja to yield. But if Ranjit Singh had been a bigot, he would certainly have stood by his previous decision.†

Well might the Muhammadans pray in their mosques for the recovery of Ranjit Singh as they did when the Maharaja fell ill in 1826.‡

There were many defects undoubtedly in the administrative system of Ranjit Singh. Though forms and institutions were evolving they were yet

* News of Ranjit Singh's Court, 20th and 22nd August.

† A very interesting incident in connection with Ranjit Singh's relations with the Muhammadans was a complaint made by Shah Ayub. He complained before the Maharaja that Sultan Muhammad Khan had married the daughter of Shah Zada Ashraf. His complaint was that it was a disgraceful thing that a Wazir should marry the daughter of a Shah Zada. Ranjit Singh said that the Lahore *Adalat* would try the case. Then he proposed to refer the matter to Captain Wade. Even in their disgrace the descendants of Ahmed Shah retained their false notions of prestige but curiously enough did not feel a sense of shame in referring such matters to an alien ruler who was no co-religionist (*Umdat-ut-Tawárikh*, II, pp. 293-94).

‡ *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*, 1826, p. 172.

in their infancy. To a large extent it was a government of discretion. The kingdom was not united by laws and adorned by arts. There might have been also a partial abuse of delegated authority. His own mind, again, does not seem to have been suited to enlarged views but only to the minute details of civil policy. The greatest defect of his system lay in the fact that the treasury was in most cases filled with the help of the standing army and it was with its help again that control was exercised over distant provinces. The personal influence of the head of the state formed the sole hold upon the discipline and affections of the troops. But the greatest merit of Ranjit Singh was that he knew where to let men and things alone. His mind unlike that of many other autocratic rulers was not obsessed by the idea of centralisation. In his government, there was centralisation, but it was mainly financial. The Sikh Government was prepared not only to allow subordinate rights to remain but also to preserve them. Mr. Temple says in his report on the settlement of the district of Jalandhar : ' As things stood there have been no convulsions, no confusions of rights and properties. The springs of society had been overstrained perhaps, but they only required removal of the pressure, no delicate readjustment was needed.' It may not be out of place to mention here two British testimonies in favour of Ranjit's civil administration. ' In a territory compactly situated, he has applied himself to those improvements which spring only from

great minds and here we find despotism without its rigours, a despot without cruelty and a system of government far beyond the native institutions of the east, though far from the civilisation of Europe.* 'It gave hope to all, roused emulation, brought out the energies of the employees and prevented their hanging on as excrescences and nuisances. As a military despotism the government is a mild one and as a federal union, hastily patched up into a monarchy, it is strong and efficient.'† Life and property were secure. The towns like Lahore and Amritsar had certainly increased in wealth; manufactures and trade were more thriving and the people were not at all over-anxious to migrate to British territories.

A Supplementary Note on Kashmir Administration under Ranjit Singh.

Kashmir—was divided into twenty purganas, had twenty collectors, ten thanahs and four hundred inhabited villages.‡ The different kinds of coins in use were :—(1) The old rupee valued at only ten annas according to Hindusthani rates. This rupee was minted at Kashmir and had the Emperor of Delhi's name on it. The transactions in the Shawl market were made in this rupee. (2) There was

* Burnes—Travels, Vol. I, p. 285.

† Lawrence—Adventures of an Officer.

‡ Asiatic Journal, Vol. XVIII, 1835.—Journey of Gholam Hyder Khan.

another kind of rupee, associated with the name of Hari Singh and as such called Hari Singhee. On one side of these coins was written 'Sri Akal Jiu' and on another 'Hurree Singh.' This was worth twelve annas—rents, taxes and customs duties were paid in this coin. (3) The third kind of rupee was called Nanaksahee; it passed current at sixteen annas throughout the dominions of Ranjit Singh but was valued at $14\frac{1}{2}$ annas at Delhi. The troops were paid in these coins.

According to Moorcroft the whole of the revenues in Kashmir amounted to thirty-six lakhs per annum. Land-rent, grain and saffron amounted to twelve lakhs and twenty-four lakhs were collected from duties on Shawl and merchandise. Converted into terms of Indian money it would amount to twenty-seven lakhs.

The whole of the military establishment of the Sikhs in Kashmir (1822) was 4,000 of which 1,000 were horsemen. The Pathan force before had numbered 16,000 to 20,000.*

According to Moorcroft the duty levied on Shawl was about fifteen per cent. of the prime value.† We know the details of the organisation of the Shawl department, from other sources. Before 1833 duty on Shawls was levied according to the number made and stamped in a year. The rate was three annas in a rupee. In 1835 General Mian

* *Ibid*: also Hugel—Travels, p. 123.

† *Ibid*.

Singh established the ' Baj ' or fixed amount to be paid by each shop. This method was continued by Sheikh Gholam Mahiuddin who, however, increased it to Rs. 120 per annum.*

Moorcroft, who was not a friendly critic of Ranjit Singh and his administration, was of opinion that Ranjit Singh used to rackrent the poor Kashmirees. This allegation may be partly true. But we have specific instances of his interest in the welfare of the Kashmirees. Some of his deputies like Jamader Khushal Singh and Gholam Mohiuddin were, however, over-rapacious. The Sikh Chief himself was intelligent enough to know that it would not be to his best interest to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. But he never attempted scientifically to tackle the problems of civil administration. Had he done so he would have known that it was necessary to establish a rigid monopoly of rice trade as a preventive against famine. Kashmir was almost inaccessible for heavy transport and as such in case of a failure of the crop, there would be a famine and no speedy relief would be possible. Such famines occurred during the administration of Ranjit Singh and no measure of relief could in such cases suffice.

* Panikkar—Gulab Singh. Punjab Political Diaries, Vol. VI, pp. 44-45. **

CHAPTER IX.

RANJIT SINGH'S EUROPEAN OFFICERS.

Ventura and Allard, the famous European Officers of Ranjit Singh, made their first appearance in the Punjab in 1822. Before them there were two white officers in the Punjab service—James and Gordon.* In the British records we come across the names of twenty European and Anglo-Indian officers who served under Ranjit. In Colonel Gardner's list of Ranjit Singh's white officers we have about forty-two names. In Carmichael Smyth's appendix occur thirty-nine names.

The idea of appointing European officers to train armies was an old one. Dr. Sen † has shown that as early as the seventeenth century European officers were greatly in demand in India as artillery experts. Balaji Baji Rao for the first time began the practice later popularised by Mahdhaji Sindhia. With the appointment by the Peshwa, in the fifties of the eighteenth century, of Muzaffar Khan and Ibrahim Khan who had been trained by Bussy, began the history of the trained battalions under the Indian chieftains, the most prominent among these being Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan, Jaswant Rao Holkar and above all Mahdhaji Sindhia.

* Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 128.

† Military System of the Marāthas, p. 127.

' Their admission created a new era in his government ' * said Wade, the British Resident at Ludhiana, referring to the coming of Allard and Ventura. But this is a mistaken view. The idea of training soldiers in the European fashion had occurred to Ranjit Singh long before the coming of these officers and, in fact, descriptive pay rolls in the Punjab Secretariat prove, as Mr. Sita Ram Kohli has shown, that battalions trained in the European fashion existed since 1811 or even earlier. Allard, Ventura and Court thus played the same part in the Punjab under Ranjit Singh as did Gordon and Lefort in Russia under Peter the Great. They were only entrusted with the task of carrying out details. They did not originate any new idea or initiate any new scheme.

' They merely gave a moderate degree of precision and completeness to a system already introduced. ' †

When Allard and Ventura made their first appearance in the Punjab, they were naturally regarded by all sections of the population as undesirable intruders. Run Singh, the Commander of the Gurkha battalion, even took courage to disobey an order of the Maharaja, asking him to submit to the orders and wishes of the Frenchmen. The Maharaja had to promise an increase of pay before

* Foreign Department, Miscellaneous, No. 128.

† Sita Ram Kohli—Army of Ranjit Singh (Journal of Indian History).

he could persuade the Gurkhas to comply.* Kharak Singh, the heir-apparent, requested the Maharaja to assign quarters to the Frenchmen at a decent distance from his own.† The Maharaja also was at first distrustful but according to Steinbach 'a submissive and judicious letter from these officers removed the apprehension of the Maharaja and he, with the spirit and originality of a man of genius, admitted them into his service. The good conduct and the wise management of these gentlemen speedily removed Ranjit Singh's prejudices against the Europeans and the door to employment being thrown open, several military men entered the service of the Maharaja.'‡ Ranjit Singh gave the Frenchmen his unreserved confidence and handed over to them one of the gates of Lahore for their egress and ingress. But even as late as 1826, some Sikh Sardars and chiefs refused to serve under Ventura and Allard and threatened to resist them by force.§ But we learn that gradually friendly relations were established between the 'Firinghee' officers and the Punjab Sardars and this state of things continued so long as the European officers were required by the Maharaja to adhere strictly to their military duties. But as grants of land were made to them, it led to heart-burnings among the Punjabi

* Political Proceedings, 22nd August, 1823, No. 19.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Steinbach—The Punjab Account, p. 62.

§ Gardner—Memoirs, Appendix.

Sardars and dissensions became frequent. To take one instance, the Maharaja made a free grant of the village of Muranpur to Ventura. It was almost a depopulated and deserted village in the vicinity of Shikarpur, the *jagir* of Kumar Kharak Singh. Ventura repopled it and as it became prosperous emigration from the Kumar's village to this settlement became frequent. In order to put a stop to this, Kharak Singh's men once attacked and plundered Muranpur and even violated the tomb of Ventura's son which was situated there. Ventura appealed for redress. Ranjit wanted him to take the law into his own hands but that was not possible in view of the relation in which an officer stands to the heir-apparent. Ventura thought himself ill-treated and applied for discharge.* The matter was somehow patched up. When once Ranjit Singh showed some intention of conferring the government of Kashmir on Ventura there was a chorus of protest from his courtiers.† Such instances may be multiplied. The Maharaja himself was not a little responsible for this ill-feeling between the Sardars and the 'Firinghee' officers. We read in the *Englishman* of 1833 that the Maharaja asked Mr. John Holmes, an Anglo-Indian Officer, in open court how much he thought Khushal Singh Jamadar had looted from the revenue of Kashmir. Mr. Holmes evaded the question and said that he was a mere soldier and knew

* Political Proceedings, 17th December, 1830.

† *Ibid*, 7th November, 1836.

little or nothing about revenue. Thus pretty often Ranjit Singh would unknowingly rouse jealousy against his white officers in the bosom of his Sardars.

Ranjit Singh's European officers were recruited from various nationalities. In Gardner's list of foreign officers, we come across Italians, Frenchmen, Americans, Englishmen, Anglo-Indians, Spaniards, Greeks and Russians. A German and an Austrian name also occur. As the Sikh Sardars were jealous of these foreign officers, they should have presented a united front, but this was not to be. The motley host remained to the end a heterogeneous body. It is quite apparent from Gardner's language against Ventura that there was no love lost between them. As Major Hugh Pearse notes, 'The French and Italian officers in Ranjit Singh's service, held much aloof from those of the other nationalities and this must have contributed to the unfriendliness.'†

Ranjit Singh tried to create a permanent interest for the Punjab among his European officers. He did not like that his 'Firinghee' officers should remain unmarried or if married have their wives and children in their native country. He wanted them to marry and settle with their wives and children in the Punjab. While conversing with Wade, Ranjit once remarked with reference to the application of a

* The Englishman, 1833, October 29th.

† Memoirs of Alexander Gardner—Appendix by Major Hugh Pearse.

European that the applicant had been asked to bring his family if he wanted to get the appointment.* After Messrs. Allard and Ventura had come to the Punjab, they married and settled in the country and Ranjit encouraged them to do so.† In the opinion of the Maharaja 'Firinghees who were single men were apt to think of their own country, grew discontented and applied for their discharge at a time when probably their services could not be dispensed with.'‡ The European officers were at first required not to eat beef, not to shave their beards and not to smoke tobacco. The third condition, however, was not always insisted upon.

As early as November, 1831, Wade wrote to the Secretary to the Government of India, 'His Highness expresses himself desirous of preventing further resort of Europeans in his service.† When Allard (Junior) in 1832 wanted to enter the Punjab service, Ranjit offered him a much lower salary than he expected, and naturally he did not enter the Punjab service. It was not his growing avarice that accounts for Ranjit's unwillingness to pay the big salaries that were demanded by the European adventurers who wanted to come to the Punjab during the latter part of his reign. His unwillingness to take more foreigners in his service was due to his consciousness that Ventura, Allard and Court as

* Political Proceedings, 20th April, 1827, No. 7.

† *Ibid*, 20th April, 1827, No. 7.

‡ *Ibid*, 4th November, 1831, No. 19.

trainers had fulfilled their mission. But those who were already in his employ did not meet with a shabby treatment solely because they had to a great extent done their work. The British records convey the impression that the European officers of Ranjit Singh were restive towards the latter part of his reign. Even Ventura is said to have once offered his services to the British Government through McGregor and later directly to Wade. But this restlessness can be explained away solely on the ground that the Punjab service was undoubtedly insecure, dependent on the life of one man, whose health had been undermined by debauchery.

Ranjit Singh looked upon his European officers as men of varied talents and he regularly made them undertake additional duties of different natures. Ventura and Avitabile were artillery instructors and also Governors of Provinces. Harlan, though usually employed in civil duties had also to command troops. Honigberger was a doctor but he had also to superintend a gun-powder factory and Ventura was even called upon on one occasion to construct a steam-boat.* Primarily however, they were wanted for their specialised knowledge of military science.

The European officers of Ranjit Singh were advocates of the policy of conquest. Their spirit is well expressed in the following lines from a British record which refers to it. 'Why keep us and your

* Memoirs of Gardner, p. 202.

† Political Proceedings, 23rd February, 1827. . . .

battalions at Lahore. We are of no use at this place. Send us across the Attock to Peshawar and we will take possession of Kabul for you.' But Ranjit always put them off with promises that he would think over their proposal. They also wanted that Ranjit should try to conquer Sindh.* They hoped by this means to establish direct relations between Ranjit Singh's dominions and France and thereby secure easy ingress and egress. The British Government looked with suspicion upon the influx of foreign officers specially Frenchmen, into the Punjab.

Under the successors of Ranjit Singh the foreigners found themselves in an atmosphere of suspicion, treachery and bloodshed. The shifting party politics of the country made their position very unsafe. The Sardars disliked them, the rulers distrusted them and for reasons not well known, they were also unpopular with the soldiery.† After the accession of Kharak Singh the mutinous soldiers plundered the house of General Court. Both Court and Ventura had narrow escapes. Lieutenant-Colonel Foulkes was put to death and Lieutenant-Colonel Ford was plundered, ill-treated and died of broken

* *Ibid.* 17th July, 1837, No. 33.

† Lawrence—'Adventures of an Officer'—'The matter has been so managed as to afford them little influence, they have instructed regiments which have been removed and replaced by others sent to be taught and in like manner taken away. This statement, if true, explains want of popularity but not unpopularity. Probably the European officers were more strict.'

heart. After such unfair treatment, with assassination following assassination, and with 'horror on horror's head,' Ventura, Avitabile and others thought it prudent to retire from the Punjab. The allegation made by Gardner that the departure of Avitabile and Ventura was 'pusillanimous and ignominious' is not justified. Admitting that he himself was treated with honour and respect, that was no reason why Ventura and Avitabile should not find reasons for hasty departure. They had occupied higher positions under Ranjit and as a consequence had more enemies. Admitting that 'they had eaten the salt of the Punjab and their departure at this critical juncture, disgusted the army which wanted efficient control,' * it was only human that they should try to leave behind them a region which was weltering in blood.

In this connection, it is necessary to discuss whether the introduction of trained battalions was in itself a better policy from a military point of view than the traditional method. Dr. Sen has shown that the Maratha Military system largely degenerated when the trained battalions were introduced and the downfall of the Marathas was to a great extent due to this degeneration. Let us take up the defects which he points out in the Maratha Military system and see whether they were present in the Sikh Army.

* Memoirs of Gardner, p. 264.

The Maratha army was denationalised on the introduction of the western system. The regular forces under Sindhia and the Peshwa were composed entirely of the non-Marathas—the Telingas, the Najibs and the Alygholes whose morality was very low. But Ranjit was quite successful in making the western system popular among the Sikhs. As Mr. Sita Ram Kohli has shown, the pay rolls show that up to 1813 A.D. the bulk of the regulars consisted of the Hindusthanies, the Gurkhas and the Afghans, whereas those of 1818 and onwards reveal that the Punjabi element was becoming more and more predominant.* Though till the end, Ranjit Singh took recruits from different communities it was the Sikhs who formed the bulk of the army and the history of the Khalsa army after the death of Ranjit Singh showed, that the rank and file possessed a strong *esprit-de-corps* which may perhaps be most easily realised by the analogy of a trade union.

As to the western officers of the Maratha regular army, it has been said, 'if the men were bad their officers were worse. Their inconsistency earned Dudrenec and his colleagues the unenviable epithet of *Dagabaj* or traitor from Yasavant Rao Holker. They were of low birth, had little education and no morals. In a war with the English, the Maratha employer could not rely on his English captains.

* Sita Ram Kohli—Army of Ranjit Singh, also Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records, Vol. I.

When war broke out in 1802, not only the English but also the French officers of the Maratha army took advantage of the Governor-General's offer. They had come to seek fortune and not to lose it.* Ranjit Singh, if we can interpret his motives from his actions, knew it quite well that to rely much on the westerners for officering his army, would be to build upon a foundation of quicksand.

Ranjit Singh once went out on a walk. Three Englishmen who had come in the company of Macnaghten, met him by accident and a conversation ensued. After a while the conversation turned upon his European officers. Ranjit said that his European officers had given him a deed of agreement and made a promise on oath that they would fight for him whoever might be his enemy. The Maharaja asked the three Englishmen whether the European officers would fight honestly for him in the event of an Anglo-Sikh war. Their reply was in the negative. They said that the 'Francisi' and the 'Firinghee' officers would not fight with the English and the French but with all other European powers except these two. Ranjit referred to the promise on oath. The ready reply was that the Maharaja must not rely upon their promise because their principle was self-interest and gain, and a promise with them was not even a hair's worth. Still the Maharaja declined to be

* Sen—Military System of the Marathas, Chapter VII. . .

convinced and referred to the excellent service they were rendering him.*

But the Maharaja was very much distressed over this frank speech of the Englishmen. On returning to the fort Ranjit Singh expressed his grief to Dhian Singh and Fakir Azizuddin that most likely the three Englishmen had spoken the truth. This conversation makes it clear that the Maharaja had thought of the possibility of his English officers behaving in a lukewarm manner in the event of an Anglo-Sikh war, in which the regular army would play the most important part. It explains the assertion of Lawrence that the European officers were retained as mere drill masters and it also explains why the matter was so managed as to afford them little influence.' †

Towards the close of his reign we find many trained Sikh generals for the regular army. In 1836, his generals were Ram Singh, Gujar Singh, Tej Singh, Ajit Singh, Ventura, Court, Misr Sukh Raj, Mian Udham Singh.‡ His disinclination to take more Europeans in his service towards the close of his reign is a point whose significance must not be lost sight of. Further, in Carmichael Smyth's appendix we come across the names of 39 foreign officers of whom twelve were Frenchmen, seven Anglo-Indians,

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. III, Part III, p. 570.

† Lawrence—Adventures of an Officer, Vol. I, p. 227; also p. 42.

‡ Ventura got the appellation 'Great General'—Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records, p. 31.

four Italians, four Germans, three Americans, two Greeks, two Spaniards, one Russian, one Scotch and only three Englishmen. Ranjit relied most upon the Frenchmen from a knowledge of the traditional hostility between the Frenchmen and the Englishmen and he was not certainly oblivious of the fact that the Englishmen, as officers in his employ, might not be safely relied upon. The British Government encouraged British subjects as a matter of policy to take service with the Maratha powers in order to safeguard Britain's interest, whereas it looked with great suspicion upon the influx of foreign officers into the Punjab, chiefly because of Ranjit's distinction of nationality in the choice of his military officers. As most of the foreign officers had left the Punjab service before the outbreak of the Sikh War it is not possible to guess how faithful they would have proved. From one or two cases of desertion we should not generalise. Allard, Ventura, Court and Avitabile were not certainly persons of doubtful credentials like most of the European officers of the Maratha army. Still we cannot assert with certainty whether they would have remained true to Ranjit if an Anglo-Sikh war had broken out during his lifetime. At least the attitude of Avitabile during the first Afghan War does not encourage an optimistic view. They were after all adventurers.* But this much can be asserted with certainty

* Adventures of an Officer—Lawrence. According to Lawrence somehow or other the foreigners all managed to keep up communications with Ludhiana. . . .

that in the event of an Anglo-Sikh war during the lifetime of Ranjit Singh, even if they might not have been a tower of strength to the Sikh monarch they would not also have been so great a source of weakness as the Europeans in the Maratha army.

The artillery of the Sikhs was much better than that of the Marathas, who relied mainly on the rejected artillery of other powers. Naturally it was the weakest branch of the Maratha service. But Ranjit Singh had foundries of his own where guns were cast, within the Lahore fort as well as in other parts of the town and at Shah Dera. The artillery was one of the best served of the branches of the Sikh army. Moreover, unlike the Marathas under Sindhia and other Chieftains, the Sikh arms and equipments were not of a heterogeneous character, the *Ghorcharas* and the *Jagirdari* Fouj being of course excepted. As a result of western discipline 'the rank and file of the Sikh army became, under the training of the skilled officers, the finest rank and file in the world. They wanted but officers to be invincible.'*

Dr. Sen says that as a result of the introduction of western methods the Maratha army resembled an eagle with its wings clipped, fighting with the English merely with its talons. It lost its mobility, its speed. The traditional method would have stood

* Mangleson—Fifteen Decisive Battles, pp. 347-348.

the Marathas in better stead. A like opinion is also expressed with regard to Ranjit's regular army. In view of the fact that most of his important conquests were made by his unreformed army and his reformed army became in the end an intolerable burden, which overwhelmed the civil constitution and brought about not only its own ruin but also that of the state, some people have expressed the opinion that Ranjit should have retained the traditional method. Let us judge the question purely from a military point of view. The trained battalions were undoubtedly intended by Ranjit against the British and the reformed Sikh army more than sufficiently justified itself during the First and Second Sikh Wars.

About the battle of Firuzshuhur Malleson says, 'The brave untutored warriors led by generals who were betraying them had, if they had only known it, won a victory. They had repulsed the British attack. They had driven back Littler, forced Smyth to retire, compelled even Gilbert to evacuate the position and thrown the whole British army into disorder. Had a guiding mind directed the movements of the Sikh army nothing could have saved the exhausted British. The battle shook the edifice of the British dominion in India to its base, impressed upon our native soldiers the conviction that the English were not invincible, gave birth in the minds of the *Siphais* to the conviction that great numbers might prevail even over their foreign mas-

ters. The *Siphai* mercenaries for the first time met an equal antagonist with their own weapons, even ranks and the fire of artillery.' In the battle of Sobraon the English army met with 'the same steadfastness and resolution.' The British victory at Chilianwala was 'of a Pyrrhoeian character...a field bravely contested by the Sikhs of all arms.' Even about the battle of Gujrat, Malleson says, 'No troops could have fought better than the Sikhs fought, no army could have been worse led.'*

It was bad generalship that lost the battles of Gujrat and Chilianwala and it was treachery even more than bad generalship that lost the battles of Sobraon and Firuzshuhur. It does not seem plausible that the guerilla method of warfare of the Sikh feudal chieftains, which availed them against Ahmad Shah Abdali, could have stood the Sikhs in good stead as against the British power. The trained battalions of Ranjit were not certainly the outcome of a mistaken policy and if they failed, that was one of the most magnificent failures of history. According to Lawrence 'the Maharaja would have shown more foresight if he had devoted the same attention that he did to the European tactics to rendering his troops really efficient after their own fashion if • he had erected fortifications around Lahore and Amritsar on European models and there planted his guns encumbering his troops in the field

* *Ibid*, pp. 366-367, 424, 467.



with but a few, perfectly equipped light artillery.*
It is open to question whether this would have been
a better policy. It is for the military critics to
pronounce the final judgment.

* Lawrence—Adventures of an Officer, 1845, p. 237. See
Appendix C.

CHAPTER X.

RANJIT SINGH'S CHIEFS AND FAVOURITES.

Mohkam Chand.—He was originally no soldier. His father was a trader. He served as a munshi under Dal Singh of Kakkoo, and then under Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat.* Disgusted with his master, he offered his services to Ranjit Singh. That the one-eyed Sikh ruler had a keen eye for merit is proved conclusively by his choice of Mohkam Chand and later of Dewan Chand. The rise of this *novus homo* also proves that in the Punjab of those days career was open to talent. In Ranjit Singh's sleepless perseverance in self-aggrandisement his chief helper was Mohkam Chand.

As a general, he was uniformly successful and from 1806 to 1814 the annexations of Ranjit were due not only to his own irresistible cunning but also to Mohkam Chand's military talents. In his cis-Sutlej expeditions, in the conquest of Sialkot and the Nakkai country and the territories of Tara Singh Gheba and subjugation of the hill states between Kashmir and the Punjab, *e.g.*, Rajori, Bhimbur, Kaloo, finally in the battle of Hydaru, Ranjit owed much to Mohkam Chand. To this able lieutenant he was also largely indebted for the

* Legal Griffin—The Punjab Chiefs, Vol. I, p. 202.

successful establishment of the fort of Philour and the efficient administration of the Jalandhar Doab. It is also doubtful whether Ranjit Singh could have got Shah Shuja under his control without the assistance of his resourceful general. The second Kashmir expedition failed as it was undertaken in the teeth of the opposition of Mohkam Chand. But the brightest episode in this Kashmir expedition was the stand made by Ram Dyal, the grandson of Mohkam Chand, heir to his fulfilled renown.

Mohkam Chand's record was not merely that of a successful general but also that of a very excellent administrator. His government of the Jalandhar Doab to which reference has already been made, was the most popular and at the same time efficient. As a governor he was the most regular in his payments to the Lahore exchequer, yet he never oppressed the people.

Wade describes Mohkam Chand as 'the first of the Raja's officers who succeeded in planting his authority in the valuable acquisitions to his power.'* He died full of honour amidst the regrets of a grateful court and to the regret of the Sikh community. He gave to the state very devoted servants in the persons of his son Moti Ram and grandsons Kirpa Ram and Ram Dyal.

Dewan Chand.—This Brahmin was another of the finds of the Maharaja. He was the Commander-in-chief of the armies that conquered Multan,

* On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces.

Kashmir and Mankera. After the successful Multan and Kashmir campaigns, Dewan Chand advised the Maharaja that Peshawar should be the next object of attack. When Sada Kour's possessions were annexed the Quiladar of Atal alone among her servants resisted. Dewan Chand took the place by force. His administration of Pakhli and Damtaur was not, however, very successful and Hari Singh was appointed in his place. Dewan Chand had also been to Bannoo and Tank. He was also prominent in the battle of Noushera. From 1814-1825 he was in charge of the Ordnance Department.* The title of *Jaffar Jung* was conferred on him after the conquest of Multan. After the conquest of Kashmir he got the appellation 'Fateh Jung' or 'Nasrat Jung.' (?) He was given a *Jagir* with an income of Rs. 50,000.†

He died on *Sravana* 5, Samvat 1882/1825 of Cholera.‡ He was a very able general, an excellent companion, and a liberal and gifted man.

Hari Singh Nalwa.—Originally a common *Khidmatgar*,§ he received recognition for his boldness, intrepidity and address and rose to the very high rank of a governor and became one of the greatest noblemen of the Punjab. He had earned the title 'Nalwa' for having cloven the head of a

* Army of Ranjit—Sita Ram Kohli; Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records.

† Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. II, p. 264.

‡ Jami-i-Jahan Nama, 1825.

• § Shahamat Ali—The Sikhs and the Afghans, p. 53.

tiger that had seized him.* He could both read and write Persian and was very well informed as regards the policy of the East India Company and the state of Europe. So the Maharaja at times requisitioned his services in connection with the missions that he sent to the British Government. He was both feared and respected and according to Masson, his deportment and intrepid conversation resembled those of Ranjit Singh.

On the Chenab, guarding and administering, as the second in command to Dewan Chand against the Kukkas and Bumbas, as an administrator in Pakhli and Damtaur, he was everywhere successful. But his best administration was that of Kashmir, which he held for two years, proving himself one of the ablest of the Sikh Governors there. But Hari Singh has left his impress on history as Ranjit's Viceroy on the Western frontier, the most difficult charge of a Sikh Viceroy. The robbers slaughtered without mercy, the Kabul monarchy overawed, the turbulent Afghan tribes kept down by his movable columns—this was the record of Hari Singh on the Western frontier. It was his work there which so much pleased the Maharaja that on one occasion he remarked, 'To rule a kingdom it is necessary to have men like you.†' When Abbas Mirza of Persia asked Mohan-

* Hugel—Travels in Kashmir, p. 254, 'his conversation proved him to have thought and reasoned justly.'

† Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, 1889-1832, III, p. 140. . . .

lal whether the Sikh army could compare in courage and discipline with his, Mohanlal's reply was—" If Hari Singh Nalwa were to cross the Indus, His Highness would soon be glad to retreat to his original government of Tabriz ".*—a reply which proves clearly the impression created by him on the Western frontier. He finally conquered Peshawar along with Nao Nihal Singh ; advanced towards the Khyber Pass and repaired and occupied Jamrud. He was there slain in a skirmish with the Afghans.

Hari Singh was a *Jagirdar* to the extent of three lakhs and sixty-seven thousand rupees of annual revenue. His son did not inherit his ability and he was given a minor post. The vast sum of money accumulated by him was confiscated by the Lahore ruler. But for this we must not regard Ranjit as ungrateful. Undoubtedly Hari Singh was a very trusted and able officer. But in money matters he was not always honest. It has been said about him on good authority, that he would report raids and misappropriate the money without undertaking these. On one occasion while the Maharaja was reviewing the troops under Hari Singh's charge he found the battalions below their full strength. Yet Hari Singh had been drawing money from the treasury at the usual rate. He was heavily fined.† But it must be said in favour of

* Mohanlal—Travels (Memoir first published in the Calcutta Observer), XIV.

† Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, 1885-1828, p. 379.

Hari Singh that his conduct was in keeping with the notions of service morality in those days. In spite of such lapses Hari Singh must be regarded as a very faithful and trusted servant, for superior to many other people in the service of Ranjit Singh. When the Maharaja shed tears on hearing the news of the death of Hari Singh, the tears were sincere and when he described the deceased Sikh Governor as a great 'Nimak halal'* the epithet was also justified.

Khushal Singh.—He was at first a menial, then an ordinary sepoy in Dhonkal Singh's regiment on five rupees a month, then a Jamadar or Lieutenant, next the house steward or Deodhiwala.† From this coveted post he was displaced by Dhian Singh but he remained the aid-de-camp of the Maharaja. This is the life-story of a man who did not, after all, justify his phenomenal rise and who richly deserves the epithet of an upstart. His original name was Khushal Ram and he was a Gour Brahmin. The story is that the Maharaja gave him the 'pahul' and at that time promised that he would never degrade him from his position.‡ This seems plausible and explains why the Maharaja continued to favour him in spite of obvious lapses. The *Jagir* which he enjoyed towards the close of his life has been estimated by Shahamat Ali as worth four lakhs

* *Ibid*, III, p. 395.

† Hugel's *Travels*, p. 287, and Shahamat Ali, *The Sikhs and the Afghans*.

‡ Shahamat Ali—*The Sikhs and the Afghans*, pp. 22-29. . .

two thousands six hundred and seventy rupees.* He was dismissed from his charge of the Deodhee in favour of Dhian Singh on the recommendation of Dewan Chand. He was, however, restored to favour shortly afterwards though not to his position as Deodhiwala.

In most of the military expeditions he took part along with others. So it is very difficult to assess his merit as a commander. His greatest military exploit was the conquest of Dera Ghazi Khan. But as an administrator he was a failure; his record of Kashmir administration was the blackest in that province. In a time of great scarcity, he so far fleeced the people along with Bhai Gurmukh Singh and Shaikh Gulam Muhiuddin that it drew severe reprimands from the Maharaja. The Jamadar paid to the treasury three lakhs in cash and five lakhs worth of 'pashmina' and at the same time filled his own pocket as much as he could. In this connection Ranjit Singh once in open durbar suggested that the property of such an offender 'who had burnt the fire of persecution,' should be confiscated.† On another occasion as Sawan Mal sent repeated letters of recommendation from Captain Wade, the Jamadar protested against this piling up of recommendation from the agent of an alien Government; Ranjit Singh's retort was that to secure a recommendation from the Jamadar, a bribe

* *Ibid.*

† Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, 3rd Part, p. 179.

would have been necessary but not so in the case of Captain Wade.* Khushal Singh was, moreover, very indiscreet in his speeches. On one occasion he quarrelled with Wasa Singh. There was a free fight between the followers of both the leaders. On being informed of this the Maharaja rebuked Khushal Singh for not having informed him about the misunderstanding earlier. Khushal's reply was that he was accustomed to do many things without informing the Maharaja. The Maharaja was so offended that he remarked that such deeds made one sink.† The Jamadar thereupon begged forgiveness and was forgiven.

These incidents show that the Maharaja knew the real worth of Khushal Singh. Still he remained a very prominent person in the Lahore durbar and, in 1839, was one of the Sikh leaders selected to co-operate with the British in the First Afghan War.

The Jammu Brothers.—The Jammu brothers, Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh, were sons of Kishore Singh and grandsons of Zorawar Singh. Their grand uncle was Mian Mota the administrator of Jammu (1808). Mian Mota was the elder brother of Zorawar. If the Gulabnama is to be believed, Gulab Singh, dissatisfied with his grandfather, at one time contemplated joining Shah Shuja but he had to give up the project. Ranjit Singh who had heard of Gulab's prowess, sent for

* *Ibid.*, p. 313.

† *Ibid.*, p. 320.

him and Gulab Singh joined the service of the Sikh monarch in 1810 and he later on brought his younger brothers. According to the author of the Gulabnama, and Mr. Panikkar who relies mainly on it, Gulab Singh contributed to many of the victories both military and diplomatic in the long career of Ranjit Singh. The Jammu brothers were accomplished courtiers. The three made a common cause. Dhian Singh became such a favourite that he displaced Khushal Singh as Deodhiwala. The three brothers became Rajas—Gulab Singh of Jammu, Dhian Singh of Bhimbur and Kussal, Suchet Singh of Ramnagar.* Gulab Singh remained away from court in his estate of Jammu and was there left entirely to himself. The brothers at Lahore pushed their common cause. The infatuation of the Maharaja for Heera Singh, the son of Dhian Singh, proved an additional encouragement in their bid for power, position and wealth.

During the later years of the Maharaja these brothers were the most potent influence in the Lahore Durbar. Indeed, Dhian Singh may very well be described as the Prime Minister. He was the channel of petition and representation. It is even said that he used to hold a miniature durbar of his own in his own house in order to facilitate the transaction of business with His Highness and that

* Carmichael Smyth—A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore, p. 256. ••

he made references only in cases of importance.* Gulab Singh is described by Jacquemont as 'a soldier of fortune, a lion in war, with the plainest, noblest and most elegant manners.'† A writer in the *Calcutta Review* describes Dhian Singh as cautious and wily in some matters, open and fearless in others, ruthless yet not openly cruel.‡ Of course both these brothers knew very well how to dissimulate and the combination which they formed, Dhian the Civilian, Suchet the soldier and Gulab Singh Combining a portion of the talents of both, was the most irresistible faction in the Punjab, in the later days of Ranjit Singh.

These Jammu brothers were anti-British—'cold and repulsive towards Europeans' as Fane puts it. There is no doubt that the brothers wielded greater influence with Ranjit than any other family in the kingdom. Masson therefore asserts that though this was not agreeable to the Maharaja, he was not willing to acknowledge his own error. It was popularly believed that he would have seized them and they aware of this did not attend the court at the same time.§ The Jammu brothers had practically an entrenched position in the hills. They expected that after the death of the Maharaja, they would establish an independent power in Jammu and the hill countries, would put them-

* Shahamat Ali—*The Sikhs and the Afghans*, p. 26.

† Jacquemont—*Travels*, Vol. II.

‡ *Calcutta Review*, 1844.

§ Masson—*Travels*, Vol. I. p. 441.

selves at the head of an anti-foreign, anti-English, national party in the Punjab, and if possible oust the family of Ranjit. If that were not possible, they hoped to set up phantom kings and rule in the manner of the Sayad brothers or the Peshwas.* We even hear from Burnes that Dhian Singh fortified his home in Bhimbur by strengthening it with guns taken from Lahore, but no one dared disclose these facts to the Maharaja.†

What Gulab Singh was doing in Jammu and the surrounding hill regions, Sawan Mal was doing in Multan. There, so far away from the centre of royal power, he went on entrenching his own position. The Dogra party was anti-foreign and pro-national whereas Sawan Mal knowing the hold of the British alliance on Ranjit Singh sought British support and pretty often Wade and Mackeson would write in his favour to Ranjit.‡ He was in a comparatively weak position because Gulab Singh had his younger brothers at Court to further his own influence and support him whereas Sawan Mal stood alone. There was no love lost between the anti-English Dogra Governor of Jammu and the pro-English Governor of Multan.

In the thirties of the nineteenth century we hear pretty often of '*fashads*' between Gulab Singh and Sawan Mal and between their people. On the advice of the Maharaja, a show of amity was restored

* A suggestion from Dr. H. C. Roychaudhuri.

† Burnes—Travels, Vol. I, pp. 287-288.

‡ Umdat-ul-Tawarikh, Vol. III, pp. 313, 291.

by Khushal Singh, Ram Singh, Azizuddin and others acting as mediators.* Though Dhian Singh had such an influence over the Maharaja, Sawan Mal's power continued undiminished and the inference is natural that the Maharaja regarded him as a make-weight on the Dogras. The Sindhianwalas, relatives of Ranjit Singh, described by Sita Ram Kohli as *Jagirdars* of the second class (Sardaran-i-Namdar), served as a real balance against the Dogras as the subsequent history of the Punjab showed.

Azizuddin.—Azizuddin along with his brothers Imamuddin and Nuruddin played an important part in the Punjab under Ranjit. Their career showed the capacity of Ranjit to rise above religious prejudice. The brothers were Ansari or Bokhari Sayads.†

Azizuddin began his career as a physician to the Sikh ruler. He is said to have been a pupil of Lala Hakim Rai, the chief physician of Lahore when Ranjit occupied that city. Ranjit found him an excellent adviser and raised him to what was practically the rank of a minister of foreign affairs. He was an excellent negotiator, possessed very considerable literary ability and played the part of a Secretary. The interpretation of the Maharaja's words was always difficult, especially in view of the

* *Ibid*, pp. 254, 436. Curiously enough in the later history of the Punjab we find Gulab Singh pro-English and Mulraj, Sawan Mal's son, anti-English.

† Lepel Griffin—Punjab Chiefs, Vol. I, p. 97.

Maharaja's partial paralysis of tongue and no one was able to do this better than Azizuddin.

He styled himself as a *fakir* and adopted the dress of a *fakir*. This he regarded as an armour in the court of Lahore, which was in its later days so full of intrigues. His politics was timid, as a diplomat he was invariably employed by Ranjit Singh in his embassies to the British Government and was used as an intermediary in his own meetings with the representatives of the British Raj. His greatest achievement as a diplomat was the defection of the brothers of Dost Muhammad which he so cunningly brought about when Dost came to wage a holy war with Ranjit but was compelled to fly without striking a blow.

His personal attachment to Ranjit Singh was very great. On the occasion of Ranjit's attack of paralysis, the *fakir* was most unremitting in his attention and McGregor says, 'Had Ranjit been his father he could not have evinced a greater solicitude.' He is described by Lepel Griffin as one of the ablest and certainly the most honest of all of Ranjit Singh's courtiers.

His brothers Nuruddin and Imamuddin were also very much trusted by the Maharaja. The former was employed in public works, arsenal and commissariat matters while the latter was in charge of Gobindgarh, the most important Sikh stronghold and governor of the surrounding country.*

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. II, p. 252. Lepel Griffin—The Punjab Chiefs.

With so much power in their hands, had these Muhammadan officers been so inclined they might have added one more party to the list of three that arose on the death of Ranjit Singh. In addition to the court, Dogra and Sindhianwala parties there might have been a Muhammadan party resting on the support of the Fakir brothers, the Muhammadan officers in charge of the artillery and the Muhammadan population of the Punjab. To the honesty of Azizuddin and his younger brothers there is no better testimony than this that the confidence Ranjit reposed in them was never misused.

Besides these people mentioned, other important persons in the Punjab under Ranjit Singh were Desa Singh Majithia, Governor of the Jalandhar Doab, **Bhowani Das**, Ganga Ram and Dina Nath, members of his civil service. Bhowani Das had been a revenue officer under Shah Shuja. He came to the Punjab in 1808, organised a pay office and a finance office. Ganga Ram had served under the Maharaja of Gwalior and he was placed at the head of the military office and made keeper of the privy seal. Dina Nath, a nephew of Ganga Ram, became keeper of the privy seal on his death and head of the civil and the finance office on the death of Bhowani Das. He was one of the most prominent persons in the Lahore Durbar, in its later days.

Ranjit ' has laid himself open to the charge of extravagant partiality and favouritism as is the

case with all despots and solitary authorities ' * but in the same breath Cunningham says that the mind of Ranjit Singh was never prostrate before that of others. The fact that Ranjit never allowed the anti-English Dogras to influence his attitude towards the English proves conclusively that so far as policy was concerned, no reigning favourite influenced it. It has also been shown that in matters of policy no favourite dared undertake anything on his own account. Neither did the rancorous enmity of the Dogra brothers prejudice the Maharaja's relations with Sawan Mal.

A Khatri, a Brahmin, a Sikh, a Brahmin converted to Sikhism, Dogra Rajputs and Muhammadans, were the prominent persons of Ranjit's Court and the very heterogeneous character of this motley group proves conclusively that he knew how to rise above communal narrowness. Mohkam Chand, Dewan Chand, Azizuddin and his brothers, Hari Singh, Sawan Mal, and Desa Singh were all very able men. The two elder Dogras were also efficient though they were not honest. In their case his departure from his usual attitude of vigilance had its nemesis. His sons paid very dearly ' for the engrossing and prejudicial influence which he allowed the Dogra brothers to attain.'

Cunningham asserts that as Ranjit ' had placed himself in some degree in opposition to the whole Sikh people, he sought for strangers whose applause

would be more ready if less sincere ! ' * but as has been shown in details in the preceding chapters, Ranjit's administration was the nearest approach to the ideal of popular monarchy that was possible in those days and in those circumstances. Apart from personal whims in the choice of favourites, we must note one thing about policy. All that was cultured and refined had disappeared from the Punjab long before he came into power ; therefore in his attempt to establish order out of chaos he had to look for administrators outside the Punjab because his own land was then all but bare of talent.

* *Ibid* (Garrett's edition).

.. . . .

CHAPTER XI.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RANJIT SINGH'S CAREER AND CAUSES OF HIS FAILURE.

Ranjit Singh was to Guru Gobind Singh what Lenin was to Karl Marx, what Omar was to Muhammad. 'Guru Gobind Singh called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flow in a particular direction. By this means the Sikh nation was poured into the mould of a special purpose and acquired solidity...he converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a means of worldly advancement. An ephemeral outburst of passion, a temporary sense of need made Guru Gobind Singh exalt the Channel...the result was that the Sikhs got a contrivance for a close union among themselves but lost their progressive power.'* There is such a thing as the logic of history; the exclusively military turn given to the Sikh character, resulted after the Sikh wars of liberation and the establishment of a theocratic confederate feudalism in the founding of a military monarchy, when a strong man arose who could compel the entire system to gyrate round himself and Sikh valour flared up brightly. •

There has been an age-long controversy between collectivistic and individualistic historiographers.

* Rabindra Nath Tagore—Translated by J. N. Sarkar, *Modern Review*, 1911.*

The former assign to collectivity the power that is creative of ideas and institutions, the latter attribute it to the individual of genius. Both are true in what they include and false in what they exclude. Admitting that the development of capacity in a nation is more a question of opportunity than of ability, we must at the same time recognise that the Jats who formed the back bone of the Sikh community were mere soldiers and became even more so as a result of the reforms of Guru Gobind Singh. Therefore power, as Ranjit Singh the last great constructive genius among the Sikhs understood it, was not moral, not even so much material as military. The system of civil administration was not bad so far as it went, but it was conspicuous by the absence of centralisation in all other departments except finance which is significant.

An Indian chieftain who could get the support of all sections of his people—Sikhs, Hindus and Muhammadans,—who could defend the North-Western frontier against a powerful Afghanistan and unruly border tribes and administer it successfully, who could train an army whose fighting qualities came as a revelation to their famous opponents, who could furnish Indian nationalism with what it greatly needs—a tradition of strength,—must always stand in the forefront of the great men of Indian history.

Among Ranjit Singh's principal achievements we must count his very successful defence of his kingdom against the Afghans. We know that

Afghanistan was at one time a part of India. But India lost it once for all. She would also have lost the North-Western frontier region, the Punjab and Kashmir but for the rise of the Sikhs and the consolidation of Ranjit's sway in those regions. It is a certainty that if the disorganised *misl*s had retained their hold over the Punjab at least the present North-Western frontier and Kashmir would have become a part of Afghanistan under the Barakzais. It was undoubtedly Ranjit Singh's military monarchy that saved those regions to India.* We sometimes hear rabid communalism dreaming of one compact Muhammadan bloc comprehending Kashmir, the Punjab, North-Western Frontier and Sindh, turning its back on India look to Afghanistan. This dream would have become history but for the career of Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh is a supreme example of an intellect without a conscience. He forgot that force, stratagem and policy alone can create only a very rude organisation. He did not breathe into the hearts of his people any noble sentiment that would have held them together after his death. Sivaji like Ranjit Singh had incapable successors. But the history of Maharashtra after his death presents a striking contrast to that of the Punjab after the death of Ranjit Singh.

It is a peculiarity of great men that they wreck their own throne. Ranjit Singh so completely

* Mr. Indubhushan Banerjee drew my attention to this aspect of Ranjit's achievement in course of a discussion.

centralised everything pertaining to his own government in himself that his disappearance caused not a vacancy but a void in which the entire structure of government was submerged.

He built up a state. But as a builder his imperfections are apparent. He saw certain things with preterhuman vividness and the faults of his intellect are associated with its vividness—'dark with excessive bright' as we may put it. For the shadows, the gradations, the middle and transition touches which make up the bulk of human and state life he had neither eye nor taste. He failed to subordinate the military to the civil authority. He left the Jagirdars weak and the army too powerful for the civilians to curb.

With the help of the standing army was the treasury in most cases filled and control exercised over distant provinces. The personal influence of the head of the state was the only hold on the discipline and affection of the troops. The army, as subsequent events proved, had a very strong *esprit-de-corps* which may be explained by the analogy of a trade union. The army considered itself as the visible embodiment of the Khalsa or the commonwealth. But 'habituated at once to violence and to slavery, the soldiers are very unfit guardians of a legal or even civil constitution. Valour will acquire their esteem and liberality will purchase their suffrage. But the first of these merits is often lodged in the most savage breasts, the latter can only exert itself at the expense of the public and both

may be turned against the possessor of the throne by the ambition of a daring rival.*

Ranjit Singh's successors were either weak, irresolute and incapable like Kharak Singh or far too hot-headed like Nao Nihal Singh to take a cool view of the situation or like Sher Singh not sufficiently intelligent to penetrate the designs of the crafty courtiers around. Of the three parties—the court, the Dogra and the Sindhianwala, the court party was the weakest. Mutual dissension, distrust and lawlessness led to the downfall of the Sikh monarchy.

Ranjit Singh was very unfortunate in one respect. The very able Sikh generals of his choice—Mohkam Chand, Dewan Chand, Hari Singh Nalwa, Ram Dyal, all died even during his lifetime. Only crafty designing men, either weaklings or traitors, survived to command his forces. Naturally the army grew out of control. After the accidental death (or premeditated murder) of Nao Nihal Singh, there remained nobody with an undisputed claim to the throne. Sher Singh's birth was suspected, more so of Dalip Singh. Naturally this disputed succession encouraged intrigues. The Punjab became a scene of the wildest disorder.

The one great external cause of Ranjit's failure is found in his relations with the British Government. Very early in his career he had entered into a treaty with the British Government. But in

* Gibbon—Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

almost all cases, as Bismarck has put it, a political alliance means a rider and a horse. In this Anglo-Sikh alliance, the British Government was the rider and Ranjit was the horse. The English limited Ranjit's power on the east, on the south and would have limited him on the west if that were possible. Evidently a collision between his military monarchy and British Imperialism was imminent. Ranjit Singh, the Massinissa of British Indian History, hesitated and hesitated forgetting that in politics as in war time is not on the side of the defensive. When the crash came after his death under far less able men, chaos and disorder had already supervened and whatever hope there had been when living, was no more when he was dead. In his relations with the British Government Ranjit Singh is seen at his worst. He never grandly dared. He was all hesitancy and indecision.

But at the same time we must acknowledge that Ranjit's failure was inherent in the very logic of events. 'All causes that were not the cause of Rome were destined to be lost. The central power once dominant, could only grow and all the outside forces could only shatter themselves against Rome as enemies or augment the strength of Rome as vassals.* This remark about Roman Imperialism is true of British Imperialism in India as well.

* Rt. Hon'ble Winston Churchill's article 'Great Fighters in Lost Causes.'

APPENDIX A.

A CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Persian Sources :

I. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*—A Diary of Ranjit Singh, a '*Roznamcha*,' written by Sohanlal, the *Akhbar Nawis* of Ranjit Singh, published by his son in 1885. I consulted the copy of it in the Buhar Library, Calcutta. Captain Wade's remark as to the value of this book is worth quoting. 'As a record of dates and a chronicle of events tested by a minute comparison with other authorities and my own personal investigations...I am able to pronounce it in those two respects as a true and faithful narrative of Ranjit Singh's eventful life.' It goes into very minute details. It is not overlaudatory though as a mere chronicle we must not expect it to be critical. Many of the details of the meetings, the nazaranahs, the rewards, whatever might have been their interest to a contemporary, are useless from a historical point of view.

II. *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*—of *Dewan Amarnath*, edited by Sita Ram Kohli. It comes down to 1836. There is a translation of a part of it in the *Calcutta Review*, 1858. This translation comes down to 1820. But the translator in the *Calcutta Review* has so interwoven his own reflec-

tions with his translation as to damage the historical value of his work. The author was for some time a paymaster of the irregular cavalry forces of the Khalsa Durbar. His father was the finance minister of Ranjit Singh. The book is of first rate importance for the political history of the Sikhs. It was used by Latif.

III. *Ranjit Nama*—Written by Kanhey Lal, mentioned by Mr. Garrett in his bibliography attached to Cunningham's History of the Sikhs. I could not obtain any copy of it but I find it translated by Rehatsek in the Indian Antiquary, Vols. XVI and XVII, though the translator mentions the title of the book as *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*. There is no doubt that the *Ranjit Nama* 1876, written by Kanhey Lal and mentioned by Mr. Garrett is the same book as *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*, lithographed at Lahore in 1876 and translated by E. Rehatsek. We learn from the translator that the *Zafarnama* is a book of 600 pages written in poetry—a feeble imitation of Firdusi's epic, the *Shah-Nama*. This *Ranjit Nama* is useless historically. It has all the defects of a bad chronicle—a mixture of memory, imagination and design. In it we find suppression of truth, distortion of facts, legend, myth. Mr. Rehatsek's condemnation that the work is characterised by a general prolixity and a redundancy of praise is far too mild. We cannot rely upon Kanhey Lal for a statement of facts, sequence of events or chronology.

IV. *News of Ranjit Singh's Court*—Written in Persian—author unknown, date 1825. It is a '*Roznamcha*'—a day to day account of the court proceedings. It gives us a graphic picture of how business was transacted in the Sikh Court. It is valuable so far as the history of the year 1825 is concerned, also as regards Ranjit's relations with Sada Kour after her incarceration and his relations with his Muhammadan subjects. The document is in the Persian section of the Imperial Record Department.

V. *Manuscript No. 622, Khuda Baksh Library*—*Hishabnama Fouj-i-Ranjit Singh*—author unknown; date early nineteenth century. It is a beautiful manuscript relating to the military system of Ranjit Singh. It is divided into three sections—cavalry, infantry and artillery. It gives a very good view of Ranjit Singh's military system in all its three branches. It is specially interesting as showing the percentage of Muhammadan soldiers and officers.

VI. *Gulabnama*—Written by the Dewan of Ranbir Singh, Gulab Singh's successor; translated by E. Rehatsek in the *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XIX. It is really an official account of Kashmir relating to the life of Gulab Singh. From the very nature of the composition it is overlaudatory. Still we can very cautiously use it with regard to the relation between Gulab Singh, his brothers and Ranjit Singh.

Two other important source books of Sikh history—the chronicle of Buti Shah and the Khalsanama of Bakht Mal could not be used in the preparation of this book. The chronicle of Buti Shah was, however, used by Prinsep and Murray along with Sohanlal's diary. Bakht Mal, the father of Raja Dinanath, takes us down only to 1807 A.D. His book was used by Malcolm in his Sketch of the Sikhs.

English Sources :

H. T. Prinsep—Origin of the Sikh Power, 1834—Based on a report by Captain Murray, Political Agent at Ambala, and from other sources, Prinsep's part being 'that of redacteur'—Prinsep as a compiler had before him also the report of Captain Wade and the reports of the Indian agents and intelligencers of the British Government.

It narrates political history as also customs and manners. The materials that Murray collected from reports, verbal information of intelligent people, were corrected and tested by him by reference to the 'Akhbars.' Both the writers apparently also consulted the diaries of Sohanlal and Buti Shah and other books relating to the history of the Sikhs.

Malcolm—Sketch of the Sikhs, 1812. It is one of the earliest accounts of the Sikhs and one of the best. But so far as the period under review is concerned it does not supply much information.

Forster—Journey from Bengal to England through the Punjab, Afghanistan and Persia ; London, 1798. Like Malcolm's sketch it is also one of the oldest and also one of the best books. It is very valuable as a very early description of the country and its people by a contemporary foreign traveller. Both Malcolm and Forster give us very admirable accounts of the state of things before the rise of the Sikh military monarchy. Some of the historical prophecies of Forster proved true.

Moorcroft and Trebeck—Travels in the Himalayan Provinces, 1819-1825, in two volumes. It is, as a writer in the *Calcutta Review* notes, ' a thing of shreds and patches.' The compiler Horace Wilson has not been quite successful in making it intelligible at all places. In the *Asiatic Journal*, 1835, 1836, we have an account of travels written by Gholam Hyder Khan who accompanied Moorcroft in his journey. This journal is edited with notes by Major Hearsey. These have been published in the *Asiatic Journal*, 1836, Vol. XXV. The Journal of Gholam Hyder Khan and some letters of Moorcroft, published in this journal, give us very valuable additional information relating to Ranjit's relations with Ladak and his rule in Kashmir. An interesting and important autograph letter of Moorcroft addressed to Sir David Ochterlony and dated May 12th, 1820, has been published for the first time in the Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society, Vol. II, Part I..

Victor Jacquemont—Letters from India (translated), 1835—an article on Jacquemont's letters was published in the *Modern Review*, November, 1931.

Jacquemont was sent on a scientific mission by the authorities of the Paris Museum of Natural history. The letters are dated 1831. A scientist's power of observation is always entitled to respect; but in his sweeping generalisations, especially about Ranjit's army, Jacquemont does not always prove himself to be a very accurate observer.

Burnes—Travels into Bokhara in three volumes, 1834. A diplomat, adventurer and explorer, he supplies very valuable information regarding Ranjit Singh's relations with Afghanistan. He had an admirable opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the history of the Sikhs at first hand as the frequent references in the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* prove. Incidentally, we have some references to Ranjit's civil administration in the account of Burnes. In the case of all foreign travellers, Burnes not excepted, we must make a distinction between what they probably saw and knew and what they heard and guessed. Burnes was not a bad observer, or he would not have been such an able diplomat. Later in Afghanistan, however, he failed to perceive the first premonitions of trouble which were quite apparent to many of his subordinate colleagues. We must in order to avoid pitfalls note that there are inaccuracies in his book.

Vigne—A Personal Narrative of a Visit to Ghazni, Kabul, Afghanistan. As a book of travels it is delightful reading. But he had all the limitations of a foreign traveller ignorant of the manners and customs of the country. When we read his account we must try to find out whether he saw with his own eyes and understood what he narrated. In that case we can rely on him. We must be very discriminating in the information we obtain from him.

Masson—Travels in Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and the Punjab. The information supplied by him is to be carefully used as in the case of all foreign travellers. The further difficulty is that he gives us no dates. He was not a very accurate observer.

Osborne—The Court and the Camp of Ranjit Singh, 1840. It is the picture of a very able British official observer. As a description of the manners of the chief, the characteristics of the different men, it is excellent. There are some very valuable reflections. The introduction, however, is largely based on Prinsep and Murray.

Mohanlal—Journey of a Tour through the Punjab and Afghanistan in the company of Lieutenant Burnes, 1834. It is important because it comes from the pen of an Indian who was one of the first products of English education in India. Accounts of Indian travellers are very important as a set-off against the narratives of the European travellers. The approach of the one is different from the ap-

proach of the other. We have accounts of European travellers enough and to spare. There are few Indian travellers' accounts.

Shahamat Ali—The Sikhs and the Afghans, 1847. He was in the Punjab immediately before and after the death of Ranjit Singh. He was a school-fellow of Mohanlal. He is one of those very rare writers of Sikh history who have attempted, however briefly, to give an account of Sikh Civil Administration.

Baron Von Hugel—Translated from German by Major Jervis, 1845—A German scientist's observations. He makes incidental references to Sikh politics and history and has a tendency to record hearsay evidence ; a foreign traveller, ignorant of the language, must be regarded as a doubtful source of information unless he is a keen and critical observer.

Steinbach—The Punjab. He was in the Sikh service and as such had an opportunity of looking into things. But his account is much too brief to be of any value.

Carmichael Smyth—A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore, 1847. May be valuable in some details. But he has a tendency to record bazar rumours. He attempts to write secret history, and relies much on hearsay evidence.

Sir H. Lawrence—Some Passages in the Life of an Adventurer in the Punjab, 1844. It is a readable novel that incidentally describes the court and

the administration. He criticises the military system of Ranjit Singh. The information, the observation and the criticism supplied under the guise of fiction are valuable.

McGregor—an army doctor—wrote the history of the Sikhs in two volumes, 1846. It is valuable so far as the period of the Sikh wars is concerned. For the period ending in 1839, it is not of much value.

Gardner's Account—The book is edited by Pearse. He was an artillery officer in the Sikh service. His account of the European officers in the Sikh service is valuable.

Fane—Five Years in India. As an aide-de-camp to Lord Auckland he accompanied Lord Auckland to the court of Ranjit Singh. His account is superficial though interesting.

Eden—Up the Country, also her letters. She was a sister of Lord Auckland and she accompanied the Governor-General in his visit to Ranjit. She describes things very vividly.

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Malcolm—On the Invasion of India by Russia.

Elliot—On the Revenues and Resources of the Punjab.

Report of the Board of Administration at Lahore.

Report of the Settlement of the Districts of the Jullundhur Doab

Lieutenant Pottinger's Memoir on Sindh.

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Indian Papers, Punjab, 1845-1849.

Parliamentary Papers—

These are the most important contemporary British official sources of information as distinguished from the non-official records of the European travellers. So far as Anglo-Sikh, Sikh-Afghan, and Anglo-Afghan relations are concerned, these are both elaborate and valuable. The English official point of view is not always correct, as we know. But even within the records there are official evidences contradicting official conclusions. A discriminating eye can discern the truth though we must always keep in mind the warning of Peter Cunningham that 'even state papers have been altered to suit the temporary views of political warfare or abridged out of mistaken regard for the tender feeling of the survivors.' Through newswriters the British agency at Ludhiana kept itself informed of the happenings in the Sikh country and informed the Central Government. Further, of the records in the Miscellaneous section the report of Wade and Pottinger's memoir on Sindh serve as good supplementary sources of information. The reports of the Board of Administration and on the revenues and resources of the Punjab as also the Punjab papers and Parliamentary papers, 1845-1849, refer to a period much later than the period under review. But in them there are references to the Sikh administrative system of the previous period.

The contemporary newspaper, *The Englishman*, has some corroborative value. For historical materials we must not normally look to newspapers as they have invariably a partisan character and distort facts. But at times they contain a modicum of truth and if they corroborate evidence obtained from other reliable sources, their evidence should not be completely overlooked.

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Cunningham—History of the Sikhs (Garrett).

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APPENDIX B.

SHAH SHUJA IN LAHORE.

On the second day after Shah Shuja's arrival in Lahore, Ranjit Singh demanded of him the world-famous Kohinoor. The Shah is said to have asked for time. Ranjit Singh was, however, impatient. The Shah says, "we then experienced privations of the necessaries of life and sentinels were placed over our dwellings. A month passed in this way. Confidential servants of Ranjit Singh then waited on us and enquired if we wanted ready cash and would enter into an agreement and treaty for the above-mentioned jewel. We answered in the affirmative and next day Ram Singh brought us 40,000 or 50,000 rupees and asked again for the Kohinoor which we promised to procure when some treaty was agreed upon. Two days after Ranjit Singh in person delivered over the provinces of Kote Cumaleeh, Jung Shawl and Khulenoor to us and our heirs for ever, also offering assistance in troops and treasure for the purpose of again recovering our throne—There was an exchange of turbans. Then Shah Shuja gave him the Kohinoor but Ranjit's part of the contract remained unfulfilled."*

According to Tarikh Sultani, Shah Shuja was received in Lahore with great honour by Ranjit

* Shah Shuja's Autobiography as detailed by Kaye, Vol. I, p. 100.

Singh who assigned to him for his residence the *haveli* of Soda Singh and another *haveli* for his harem. If needed, intercourse between the two residences could be interrupted. When Ranjit Singh demanded the Kohinoor Shah Shuja sent an answer that it was not at hand just then but would be forthcoming as soon as more intimate friendship could be established between him and the Maharaja. The demand having several times been iterated and eluded by the same subterfuge, Ranjit Singh ceased to supply his guest with food and drink and after keeping him for a month in great distress offered him 50,000 *nanakshahi* rupees for the Kohinoor (he could not have been kept altogether without food and drink for this long period). But now the Shah insisted on a written bond of alliance and Ranjit Singh had at once a document concocted in which he swore by Guru Nanak and the Granth that he would never cease to be the friend of Shah Shuja whereupon the latter gave up the famous diamond and Ranjit Singh withdrew the guards he had placed over the house of his guest and communication with his harem was restored.*

The autobiography and the *Tarikh Sultani* are in substantial agreement. The only important point of difference is the unfulfilled promise of a *Jagir* and on this point Shah Shuja need not be disbelieved.

It is well-known that after Shah Shuja had been seized by Ata Muhammad Khan of Attock, the

* The Indian Antiquary, Vols. XVI and XVII, Foot-note.

lancet was frequently held over his eyes and his keeper once took him to the middle of the Indus with the arms bound threatening him with instant death* with a view to extort the Kohinoor from him. Wafa Begum, the wife of Shah Shuja, sent a petition to Ranjit to the effect that the Afghan Wazir was talking of taking Kashmir and in that case her husband would be taken to Kabul and his eyes would be taken out. So Ranjit Singh was requested to come to his rescue. Ranjit was also told that the Kohinoor was in Kashmir with the Shah and if he was taken to Kabul the priceless jewel would be taken along with him.† Thus it seems quite probable that Wafa Begum promised Ranjit Singh the world-famous jewel if he succeeded in rescuing Shah Shuja from the hands of the Afghans and the Sikh ruler could claim it in return of the services rendered. But the ex-king was not a simpleton like Muhammad Shah the Timurid so that a wily exchange of turbans would bring the Sikh ruler the world-famous Kohinoor. The Shah continued to elude him by inventing subterfuges. In this Kohinoor transaction 'The character of Ranjit Singh more unscrupulous than cruel' was, as Osborne says, 'curiously displayed in the measure he adopted. No greater severity was employed than appeared absolutely necessary to overcome the obstinacy of the Shah and none was omitted that promised the accomplishment of the

* Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, II, p. 131, and Burnes—Travels, III, p. 243.

† Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, 1812.

end.' * It required more self-denial than is to be expected, that with the world-famous diamond in his grasp, he would not try to secure it merely out of respect for 'the shade of that which once was great.' Reverence for the past was not his weakness. Moreover, it must be said in his favour that the famous jewel was taken away from India by one of her rapacious invaders. It was quite in the fitness of things that an Indian king would consider himself better entitled to its ownership than any foreigner.† He had been lavish in his promises and most certainly regarded these as a diplomatic means of inducing the Shah to give up the Kohinoor and as such not binding on him. But in this connection we cannot but contrast his unscrupulous treatment of Shah Shuja with his humane treatment of Shah Ayub for whose subsistence he granted an allowance of rupees one thousand a month.‡ We believe if the Shah had been merely a helpless dependent ex-King the treatment would have been different.

After this, Ranjit went with the ex-King to Rotas, and thence he went to

* Osborne—Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh, Introduction, xxxii.

† I should acknowledge that this view-point is a suggestion from Dr. Raychaudhuri.

‡ Ayub Shah was also given a Mouja whose income was Rs. 3,000—Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, p. 382, Vol. II.

Pol. Proceedings—20th October, 1837, No. 70—Shah Ayub had a house allotted to him and Rs. 1,000 a month; Rs. 1,860 was also given to different members of his family.

Rawalpindee to watch the movements of Fateh Khan. But the expedition was abandoned and 'Ranjit desired him to accompany Ram Singh. Left alone with that chief he was shamelessly plundered by robbers of a higher note than the Sikh Chief would willingly admit. All thought of proceeding to Peshawar was now abandoned and accompanied by Ram Singh and the heir-apparent, Shah Shuja now returned to Lahore. There too he was plundered and Ranjit Singh stripped him of everything that was worth taking (it is even said that Bhai Ram Singh and a party of females was sent to search his interior apartments). Even after this spies were set around him and guards surrounded his dwellings. Five months passed in this way. His family then succeeded in escaping to Ludhiana and was placed under British protection and he himself after a time, in spite of redoubled precautions, somehow managed to run away to the hill territories. After an ineffective attempt on Kashmir with the assistance of the Raja of Kishtwar the Shah finally returned to Ludhiana in September, 1816.—This is the version of subsequent events given by Kaye from Shah Shuja's autobiography.

From the *Tarikh Sultani* we get the following version : 'sometime afterwards Ranjit Singh marched to Peshawar to attack Fateh Khan and compelled Shah Shuja to accompany him although he suffered greatly from asthma. On returning to Lahore, Ranjit Singh left Shah Suja at Rawalpindee

in charge of Ram Singh who with Kharak Singh carried off secretly all the bedding and furniture of Shah Shuja robbing him likewise of some of his money and on his taking them to task for what they had done gave evasive replies. At last Shah Shuja was taken to Lahore and there kept closely guarded which indignity so disgusted him that he determined to fly but being loath to do so without his family, he hired a number of carts outside the town and dressing his family in the costume of Indian women who frequented his harem got them on four different occasions conveyed out of the town..... Thus all departed to Ludhiana and he himself afterwards escaped through the agency of Kukkakhan of Sialkot.*

There is one material point of difference between the *Tarikh Sultani* and the autobiography of Shah Shuja as detailed by Kaye. The former mentions robbing by Kharak Singh and Ram Singh but does not mention that Ranjit stripped him for the second time and even the Shah's interior apartments were searched. Instead we read that the ex-King was so disgusted with his surveillance that he determined to fly.

Therefore I am inclined to doubt the Shah's allegations of the search of even the interior apartments by a party of females and such other extortions. Though there is a legitimate ground for

* *Indian Antiquary*, XII and XVII. Foot-note.—Ed.

doubt, yet such a procedure is not altogether improbable. From Ranjit Singh's point of view it must also be admitted that one of the officers of the Shah's house-hold, Mir Abdul Hassan, not faithful to the Shah, plotted when in Lahore to make it appear to Ranjit Singh that the ex-King was in concert with the Kashmir Governor and news of fresh intrigues of a similar character are said to have reached the ears of the Sikh monarch. His subsequent attempt to despoil Shah Shuja might have been due to a desire to cripple the Shah's resources so that he might not carry on further intrigues.

The real reason for the flight of Shah Shuja was his growing conviction that Ranjit would not help him against Fateh Khan and as Cunningham notes, his perception of the design of Ranjit to detain him as a prisoner and to make use of his name for purposes of his own. This view is corroborated by the evidence of the Zafarnama of Amarnath where we find Shah Shuja trying to secure Ranjit's help to fight Fateh Khan. Ranjit's reply was that the best policy was that of delay. Sadi Khan Kotwal was appointed to guard Shah Shuja. When the Shah protested Ranjit replied that the ex-King was not a prisoner but had only a guard of honour.*

But if the ex-King's grave allegations about Ranjit Singh's treatment after the loss of Kohinoor be true, the enormity is not mitigated by the counter-

* Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, A.D. 1815.

charge of the intrigues of the Shah, by any indefinite allowance for the environment or by finding out parallels from the history of the West. The Kohinoor was worth a king's ransom far more than of an ex-King.

APPENDIX C.

THE REGULAR ARMY OF RANJIT SINGH.

(Based on the catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records, Volume I, as corroborated by the *Hisabnama*—Fouj-i-Ranjit Singh.)

		No. of men.	Total number.	Monthly total payment.
1811	Infantry	2,852	4,061	Rs. 32,173
	Artillery	1,209		
average per head 7·9 rupees				
1838	Infantry	29,617	38,242	Rs. 3,74,101
	Cavalry	4,090		
	Artillery	4,535		
average—				
	Infantry	7·7	}	Total average
	Cavalry	22		
	Artillery	7·2		
12·4				

	Average salary per month.
Kumidan eommandant *	Rs. 60 to Rs. 150 a month
Mahzur	Rs. 30 to Rs. 60 „
Subadar	Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 „
Jamadar	Rs. 15 to Rs. 22 „
Havildar	Rs. 13 to Rs. 15 „
Naik	Rs. 10 to Rs. 12 „
Sarjan	Rs. 8 to Rs. 12 „
Phuriya	Rs. 7-8 to Rs. 10 „
Sepoy •	Rs. 7 to Rs. 8-8 „

* *Hisabnama*—Fouj-i-Ranjit Singh—

	Rs.	A.	P.
Atar Singh Man Kumidan	...	120	0 0
Ram Singh Sabib Singh Kumidan	...	101	0 0
• Mohar Singh Kumidan	...	150	0 0

The cash monthly payment was a system borrowed from the East India Company. Formerly the Jagirdar and Faslanadar Systems had been more general. The harvest-time payment, however, steadily disappeared. But the monthly payments were not regularly made. The army, as a rule, were in arrears for five to six months. The troops were normally paid five times a year. Merit did not go unrewarded. Neglect of duty did not go unpunished. Men served so long as they were physically fit. There was no regular pension. But thirty per cent. of the vacancies were filled from the members of the family of the retiring soldiers. A kind of allowance was sometimes granted to the families of the dead and the wounded.*

	Rs.	A.	P.
Bhowani Singh Kumidan	...	90	0 0
Bhim Singh Kumidan	...	138	8 0
Dewan Singh Kumidan	...	90	0 0
Abdur Rahim Kumidan	...	90	0 0
Mengal Singh Kumidan	...	60	0 0
Golab Singh Kumidan	...	50	0 0

* In the pay rolls we come across a section entitled 'Dharmarth' in which is recorded payment to the families of the dead and wounded soldiers. A specimen is given here. In the first few pages of the *Hisabnama* we find recorded payments to 135 men under Atar Singh Man Kumidan. Then under the heading 'Dharmarth,' we have the following payments recorded :—

	Rs.	A.	P.
Gurdit Singh's wife	...	2	0 0
Ram Singh's widow	...	3	8 0
Sukka Singh's mother	...	3	8 0
Khazan Singh's mother	...	3	8 0
Bhag Singh	...	4	0 0

In this way we find payments on the principle of 'Dharmarth' throughout the entire *Hisabnama*.

In view of these facts and figures, the following criticism of Lawrence seems exaggerated. Lawrence says, ' The building completed, the Maharaja does not think the same care necessary for its preservation, as for its construction. The keystone of an army is wanting. There is no undisputed punctual pay.' The average monthly pay of the infantry and artillery was 7·8 in 1811, when service in the regular army was not at all popular and recruits were very difficult to find. The average for the infantry and artillery was 7·7 and 7·2 in 1838 when service in the regular army had become very popular and recruits were so easy to find. Ranjit Singh had not taken advantage of the popularity of the service to lower the pay to any considerable extent. The salary from the commandant to the sepoy in the Sikh service compared very favourably with the corresponding ranks in the Company's service. It was not a pitiless organisation. Some consideration was shown to the family of the dead and the wounded.

It must, certainly, be acknowledged that the irregularity of payment was one of the greatest defects of Ranjit's military organisation. He had introduced the monthly payment system in imitation of the British. But this was absolutely an innovation. It demanded such a high order of administration and revenue system as the Sikh monarchy had not yet attained. Therefore his Mahdar system became practically a compromise between the old faslanadar system and the monthly system of

payment. The Maharaja was also most probably of opinion that to keep his soldiers at least several months in arrears would ensure a better discipline in the army.

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